Exploring the understandings and experiences of cyber violence amongst teenage girls

By

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A dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Education,

University of KwaZulu-Natal

September 2020

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'As the candidate's supervisor, I agree/do not agree with the submission of this thesis.'

Signed _____

Name: Professor Shakila Singh

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Dedication

With love, reverence, and gratitude, I offer my most humble Pranams at the Divine Lotus feet of my omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient Lord, Bhagawan Shri Sathya Sai Baba. He has blessed me with the opportunity to grow on a spiritual, academic, professional and personal level. Even during the most challenging times, I felt comforted and reassured, knowing that with His grace, anything I aspire for is possible.

TO:

My mum, Subbamma Naicker – the woman who has been my pillar of strength and symbol of unconditional love through every part of my life. Thank you for investing in me and for allowing me to pursue all my passions. You reassured me, fed me well, listened to my woes, lessened my burdens, and have been by my side through this journey.

My dad, Ganas Naicker – the epitome of selflessness and wisdom. I am grateful to you for being a driving force in my life and for the sacrifices you made so that I can have a better future. You drove me to campus, waited patiently, and taught me to think positively.

Dr Usha Neelakantan – my encouraging and kind-hearted aunt. Thank you for believing in me even when I lost belief in myself. You are an example of perseverance, and that has taught me to be determined and to deal with the challenges I face, come what may.

My late uncle, Dr Gesha Naicker, inspired me during both my undergraduate and postgraduate journey, which I sincerely appreciate. You always spoke positive words into my life. Thank you for being with me in spirit.

My supervisor, Professor Shakila Singh, has become more than a supervisor to me. I am most fortunate and honoured to have been under your supportive and enlightening guidance. You are passionate about research, and this has had a significant influence on my journey as a student. Through the years I have known you, you have strived for my betterment and motivated me to work more diligently. I am genuinely thankful for your positive influence, vast experience, and abilities. I value all the opportunities you provided me with to develop as a student and the compassion and consideration you have shown to me.

Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude to:

My three siblings – Desigan, Kirosha, and Poovasha and my brother-in-law Rajiv, for continually cheering me on even when you faced so many personal challenges yourselves. Thank you for all your advice and care every step of the way. I knew I could count on you and talking to you about my experiences felt therapeutic. When I look back on all the tough times we have endured together as a family, especially in recent years, it evokes in me a greater sense of respect for each of you as you stood tall, reliable, and ready to tackle the obstacles.

Mr and Mrs Prem and Asha Singh instilled in me spiritual teachings that have been instrumental in moulding me. You have taught me the value of both secular and spiritual knowledge.

Professor Deevia Bhana, for most valuable, informative, and insightful PhD seminars that served as a platform for addressing the challenges we encountered as individuals and as a group during the research process. The sessions have enriched my understanding and assisted me greatly in the writing of this thesis. You are meticulous and always have students' best interests at heart. I thank you for investing in me and always going the extra mile.

Devanya Reddy, my research supervisor's daughter, thank you for your time and patience in explaining many vital concepts, options, and ethics to me that were pivotal in designing this study. Many of the initial ideas for this study emerged from my discussions with you.

The 30 teenage girls (research participants) who were so willing to participate, sacrificed their time and shared their in-depth experiences with me – without all of you, this study would not be possible.

I am grateful to the principal and members of the school governing body of the research site, for permitting me to research learners of the school. To the management and staff of this institution (my colleagues), I thank you for being kind and considerate towards me during this study.

My extended family and friends, for your thoughtful messages, phone calls and interactions, which have truly warmed my heart.

My dear departed and sorely missed paternal and maternal grandmothers – neither of received formal education, but you taught me some of the essential lessons in life. I hold on to this tightly, even now.

Professor Shakila Singh and The University of KwaZulu-Natal, for kindly providing me with funding.

Preface

My journey as a South African, Indian, working-class young woman

This study focusses on gaining insight into teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. It is a study that is associated with my personal life. Without a doubt, this has facilitated the rise of my research. Hence, it is of utmost importance for me to provide details about my personal life, being a South African Indian woman with various factors impacting my life.

I was born in the year 1990, and I am the third-born child of working-class parents. I have two sisters and one brother. Both my parents came from conservative Hindu homes with large family sizes. Arranged marriages were a norm during this period, but my parents did not have an arranged marriage per se. My aunt (father's sister) got married, and she lived in the same neighbourhood as my mother which led to my father meeting my mother and, after that, asking my paternal grandmother to approach my mother's family with a marriage proposal. After much persuasion, my mother agreed to marry him, especially after my paternal grandmother promised not to compel my mother into doing lots of household chores – which was considered a rarity where societal norms demanded much of women in the household.

My mother was the youngest of seven children in her home. My maternal grandparents expected my mother's elder siblings to work hard at home and in their work environments, while they did not expect the same of my mother. She was "the apple of their eye". Her family had a much better financial status than my father's family. My father was the second youngest son in a family of eight children. His family lived in a home characterised by poverty, uncertainty and much struggle. He and most of his siblings left school at an early age to join the working world to provide for their family since their only breadwinner, my grandfather, passed away suddenly one day.

When my mother got married, her life changed completely – from a life of comfort and having everything she needed, to facing tough times, side by side with my father. My father was a waiter in a hotel at that time (he later worked at a magazine press), and my mother was a machine worker in a clothing factory. They both travelled by public transport to and from work. We lived in a small two-bedroom council house in Umkomaas that my parents worked diligently over many years to buy.

I still live in this house with my parents and younger sister – and their diligent efforts have ensured that it is more than a two-bedroom house today. After applying great financial discipline, they saved what little they could, over the years, to extend the size of the house into now, a four-bedroom home with plenty of space to accommodate our growing family.

In order for my parents to make ends meet and pay for this home over the many decades, they faced many financial struggles. Hence, they were able to provide us with just the basics required. My parents made it very clear that being educated was pivotal in improving our financial situation. Hence, despite not having completed school themselves, they made every effort to ensure that we persevered and excelled at school. They taught us to help each other, work together, visit the library, read lots of books, and seek help if we did not understand our school work. There was severe punishment if we did not do homework, got poor marks in any subject, or if they got word of any of our misdemeanours at school. Discipline was at the forefront of my parents' approach to raising my siblings and me - this was non-negotiable, no matter our age and age differences.

My brother, despite having much potential, for some reason, was falling behind with his schoolwork, becoming very mischievous and troubling his teachers. Being very concerned about this, my parents decided that my mother would quit her job and stay at home to ensure that he got back on track and rendered substantial improvement in his academic results which had a positive impact on his schooling. He was top of his class the very same year. However, this had a negative impact on our finances, as now my mother was no longer earning an income, and there was no way my parents could manage the household expenses with my father's income only.

My mother then became one of many vendors outside a primary school near our home – the very same primary school that we attended. She sold chips, sweets, ice lollies, and much more. This small business allowed her the opportunity to earn an income. It also allowed her to return home with us in the afternoons, where she kept a watchful eye and ensured that we did what they required of us.

As the years went by, the rising cost of living continued to be a problem, considering our needs were growing too. With my mother's excellent cooking and baking skills, she then decided to freshly bake savouries and sweet treats and sell them to clients. These were either neighbours, family, or friends who devoured her products and regularly supported her business which helped to supplement the household income. Currently, my older sister, being inspired by my mother's skills, has successfully intertwined her passions to develop her business ventures in writing, communication, and the culinary industry.

My father began to collect scrap metals and sell them to people in the scrap metal industry for extra money. He also got a weekend job with a catering company run by a family who attended the Temple that we attended. He carried heavy pots, helped to prepare the meals, and served them to the guests at the functions. He challenged traditionally held gender stereotypes by undertaking particular tasks that he did. The lady who was in charge of the catering company was very kind and often gave food that was remaining from the function to my father, which he would bring home, and we would have for supper.

I have the freshest memories of seeing my parents struggle to make ends meet to provide for their children. I have watched my parents walk every morning carrying heavy bags and cooler boxes to the school where my mother was a vendor as we could not afford a vehicle. After leaving my mother at the school and helping her to set up, my father would hitchhike for a lift to work, and he did this for more than three decades. Both of them ventured forth in the rain, wind, heat, and stormy weather, never giving up, even when things got tough.

There came a time when the school management was clamping down on the vendors outside the school for several reasons. One day, in our presence, the school principal and his deputy principal accosted my mother. They began speaking to her most condescendingly and rudely, asking her to pack her bags and never return to sell there, as according to them it was not permitted. As I look back on this experience, I recognise their exercise of male power and superiority, which they used to subordinate my mother. However, she contravened traditionally expected gender norms by challenging these two men and stated that anyone could sell there as it was not within the school premises but outside. They threatened to phone the police if she did not move, but she did not collude with their expectations of her. They eventually gave up on the idea of asking her to leave. When I think back to this day, amongst many others, I have the greatest admiration for my mother, who was brave and fearless.

The educators at the school did not make things more comfortable, as they treated my siblings and I with much contempt and continuously rebuked us about our parent being a vendor. We did not get school fees concessions even though our monthly income was way below the income required to qualify for it. They embarrassed us in the presence of other teachers and learners too. My siblings and I have many stories to tell of even how learners were mean to us too, made jokes about our suffering, looked down upon us, did not want to befriend us, and always made it known to us that they lived more comfortable and luxurious lives than we did. It was heartbreaking – but not as heartbreaking as seeing our parents going through much physical, mental, and financial strain just to provide for us.

Today, my father continues to sell as a vendor outside the school, and we ensured that he attains a hawker permit in line with the laws of informal sector business. My siblings and I do assist them financially. However, my parents believe that in our country's poor economic climate, living expenses will be manageable only if they put in the extra effort.

My father is indeed a disciplined and committed man. Going through the ageing process is not easy, I am sure, but he still gets up early to leave home to sell as a vendor. He knows that we are not fully supportive of his choice to continue with this, especially on days of inclement weather. Hence, he chooses to wake up, get ready, and sneak out of the house before any of us find him leaving and try to convince him not to go. We have tried long and hard but have been unsuccessful in getting him to retire. My mother is now a lady of leisure, after her decades of sacrifice and turmoil.

When the magazine press that my father worked for closed down, he was left without a job. He searched hard to find any job to earn money. He then decided to help my mother, who was still selling at the school as a vendor until he found a job. He needed to be occupied, as depression was setting in. During this time, I recall that it was difficult to put food on the table, as there was barely any money for food, but our parents ensured that we went to bed after having eaten something at least. I know there were times where they did not eat meals, but never showed signs of hunger or suffering. These occurrences made us realise that diligence and dedication to education would be our lifeline and a chance at a better life.

To show our gratitude to our parents for doing everything in their power to make sure we had food, clothing, shelter, and school, we followed their instructions. They expected us to attend prayer services at temples and ashram. We had to be physically active and play outdoor games together. We had to take public transport, and never ask for luxuries like cell phones and branded clothing. We had to do household chores; my brother and father included, which challenged traditionally held gender norms. The reason was that we could not afford a domestic helper for many days in the week.

I got diagnosed with asthma, but my parents did not treat me differently from the other children at home. They ensured that I received monthly asthma management at public hospitals and made sure I took my required medication. I also had to do chores like everyone else. While many of my classmates who had asthma regularly stayed away from school due to frequent attacks, my parents wanted me to try to live a healthy life and attend school regularly. They had difficulty keeping me away from school, even when I did struggle with the wheezing episodes.

I knew deep down that there was too much at stake for me to take regular breaks or even sit with self-pity when I had lessons to learn, assessments to do, grades to pass, and goals to achieve. Moosa (2017) also speaks about the challenging time she had growing up, but, her mother did not allow her and her brothers to function within "a poor me discourse".

One of our most favourite activities was reading sample magazines and exploring the science series. We also enjoyed doing scrapbooking with kits and using the sample letter prints that my dad received from his company. These activities improved our knowledge of current affairs, scientific knowledge, and creative skills.

In the years after this, it made us appreciative of what we received, never demanding anything that was not a need or complaining about what we were going through. My parents tried for news about this situation not to reach our extended family members, as we were not about to start pitying ourselves or placing our burdens on their shoulders. However, there were a few people who found out about it, like my paternal grandmother, my youngest paternal uncle, and my older maternal uncle, and they very selflessly and kindly tried to help us. What they have done for us is etched in our hearts and memories forever.

My youngest paternal uncle was my dad's only sibling, who received an education. He was a lecturer at university during this time. Whenever he came home, he would provide support to us in several ways, like buying groceries, paying bills for us, taking a personal interest in all four of us, and motivating us about our educational goals. He treated us like his very own children and was very proud as the years went by, at how we managed to achieve the goals we set out. He was the person who we went to when we sought career advice or any advice for that matter. Even during his last days on earth during his illness, he cared deeply for us. Today, his wife is here for us, inspiring us to embrace the wonderful things that happen to us and consoling us every time we face a challenge.

After about two years of being unemployed, my uncle (maternal aunt's husband) managed to arrange a job for my father at a car wash, vehicle hire service, and car dealership. Here too, he braved the weather elements by washing cars and worked for a pittance to ensure that he could take care of us. Through all these trials and tribulations, my parents managed to equip us with primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

If I look back now, being a girl, coming from a conservative background, a working-class family, having parents who did not receive an education, there being us four children, and much financial struggle. It was unlikely that I was going to be the recipient of tertiary education, especially since most of our extended family also did not receive tertiary education.

I express my utmost gratitude to my two older siblings, for if they never made it their priority to convince my parents and enrol for tertiary studies, we would never have been allowed to do so. Each of the four of us had a weekend and holiday jobs during our tertiary education - at a grocery store, clothing outlet, or restaurant to pay for our travelling fees, books, and other tertiary institution costs. When my younger sister pursued her nursing degree, it was compulsory for her not only to attend lectures at university but also to travel to hospitals or clinics to make up a certain number of clinical hours. She travelled by public transport to unsafe places during the early hours of the morning and commuted back home late at night because we could not afford to buy her a car or have the money for her to travel with private transport. It was risky, but she had to do that to fulfil her dream of becoming a nurse. We did not receive anything on a silver platter. There was immense sacrifice and turmoil, too, in many steps we had to take. We had to apply for student loans that the government offered, which we would repay with interest when we completed our studies and began employment. I believe that this was our parents' way of teaching us independence and to invest in our futures. They felt that if we had the student loans, we would become liable to pay for it later on, and therefore never mess around on campus.

Nevertheless, my parents were there to celebrate our successes and were right by our side encouraging and motivating us when we faced our fears and failures. They were not formally educated but placed the utmost importance on our education and wanted us to have every opportunity that they never did. I must add that although they are not educated, through observing them and listening to them over the years, I realised that they are indeed wise and sensible people.

Most children our age had the best mobile phones and other gadgets – which we never had. We could not keep up with these trends, and neither did we ever try. Our parents only allowed us to have a mobile phone (an old phone which was lying around at home, which initially belonged to my parents) when we went to campus. The reason they felt it necessary was in light of us travelling long distances, the crime rate being high, and them wanting to be able to contact us or us to contact them in cases of emergency. Even our friends on campus laughed at our old, outdated phones. However, this never meant that we were "behind the times", as we made it our prerogative to keep updated about current affairs. When my brother began his working career, he bought us a home PC and installed the internet. Our progression was taking place, stride by stride, year by year.

However, my parents were still very conservative people. They were very wary about the company we kept, and they never allowed us to attend social functions with our friends, such as parties. My father was a disciplinarian, and he set the rules explicitly. One stern look, and we knew he meant business. Nevertheless, he always had an open-door policy, and we could talk to him about things that bothered us.

My mother, though, was always headstrong (this is still the case), and once she had a set idea, it was difficult to change that. More so, she would beat us up if we disregarded any of their instructions. She often kept a very close eye on the way we dressed and the way we conducted ourselves, especially us three girls. She felt that a girl's reputation is the most valuable possession that she has, in that way, colluding with societal norms and expectations.

Besides that, my siblings and I attended spiritual classes. At the age of 11, I attended a spiritual education class at a spiritual organisation once a week. I also attended the prayer services and participated in other activities, including charity-related work done there. We were taught not to waste food, money, energy, and any of the natural elements. The spiritual teachers taught us about our carbon footprint to make better choices when it came to caring for the planet. They also taught us to keep a low profile, spend more time in meditation, and read spiritual literature than engaging in activities like gossiping, talking too much or exposing ourselves online. It was tough being a teenager and having to follow the spiritual disciplines I learnt. There were many times I was even laughed at by my friends for the amount of time I spent on spiritual activities, as opposed to social activities. More so, I was laughed at even by the learners I taught for having no clue about mobile phone technologies and social networking sites. However, I possessed sound computer skills.

I was satisfied with using my mother's old phone, despite the negative opinions about what I had. My youngest paternal uncle, his wife, and my brother were the people who bought me smartphones. They encouraged me to explore online spaces, as it made life so much easier in many ways. They were right. Mobile phones and the cyber world offer their users many benefits in terms of learning, communication, social functions, global updates, and so much more. I started to embrace these features and was glad that I was becoming more open-minded about things. I was always careful about privacy and security settings.

I made so many observations during the time that I spent online. I made observations related to girls and young women in particular, and my curiosity about my observations grew. To me, what stuck out was that cyber interactions for female cyber users were associated with a variety of aspects.

The cyber interactions included motivational and inspirational, being activists for particular causes, fashion and trendsetting, seeking comfort and encouragement and updating about one's personal life, especially relationship statuses. I frequently noticed that girls were very extroverted online, even those that I generally felt were shy, depicting the mismatch between offline realities and online posts. I recognised that much of the focus is on physical appearances, competition for attention and fame, and conflict over these issues too.

One may ask, then, what is my relationship to this study? I have not experienced cyber violence, but I witnessed it happening to others, especially young women, countless times – to my friends, family members, learners at my school, colleagues, acquaintances, and even strangers. I have seen the severe and lasting impact it has had on them.

While I was not a victim of cyber violence, I contended with many issues related to my physical appearance. While my sisters were gorgeous physically (and still are), I had a very dark skin colour, about which I developed an inferiority complex. In addition to this, while I was rather petite when I was a child, during my teenage years, I struggled with weight issues, and despite trying hard, I just could not lose the bodyweight quickly. I was teased and ridiculed about my physical appearance. I was teased during my primary and high school years, mostly by boys but also by girls. Those childhood memories of being taunted by other school children are still raw and fresh wounds that I cannot get over.

As a result of this, I never wanted to be in photographs or see photographs of myself, since I was too self-conscious about my appearance. I did not want to interact online as this is a space I noticed, where girls portray themselves as extroverted and construct their images according to their beliefs about what society expects of them. I had many reservations about online spaces. I was afraid of criticism. I just wanted to be myself, learn to accept myself and be content about who I was. I always thought about the fact that being mistreated online would be worse, as the cyber audience is massive. Hence, I stuck to emails, phone calls and text messages.

When I heard my friends speak about their time online and the things that go on in social networking sites, I felt I was better off not being there. Furthermore, while our financial situation at home improved, I had learned that saving money is essential, and I initially felt that spending it on social networking sites was throwing it away. However, little did I know what was in store for me.

When I registered for a PhD at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and was very despondent about what the topic of my research should be, my research supervisor and I had a conversation about the emerging trends in research. She asked: "What do you think about cyber violence?" to which I replied: "But I do not know much about it". Her response was then: "Research it and see where it goes." Initially, I was reluctant and felt that I was not going to cope with this topic. I thought about how this research was contrary to the roles expected of me as an educator. There are expectations for teachers to give learners a negative impression of cyberspace, to curb their interactions on it, and punish them for their wrongful actions.

However, the more I read about research in cyberspace and about cyber-related issues, the more I learned about this gendered phenomenon and realised that it is indeed a problem that society and teenagers in particular face. I felt that if I had to research this space, I could not be an outsider. I had to immerse myself in aspects related to the research (my supervisor felt this way too and encouraged me to explore further). The more I explored, observed, and interacted online, the greater understanding I had of online dynamics. I explored in two ways. The first was on a personal level by being on social media with selected friends, family, and colleagues. It felt terrific in a way, and I marvelled at how technology worked but also felt appalled at the violence online. Hence, I concluded that cyberspace is a double-edged sword. At times, I admit, I was not very good at keeping up with cyber technology, and this even happens today. The second way was by setting up a Facebook group to conduct one of the research methods for this study, going online, and being very open-minded. It made sense to me – I was not going to do a PhD study about a phenomenon and a space I hardly knew. When I discovered something new, it felt like a milestone for me, and this is still the case. It allowed me to learn, and I was ready and enthusiastic to do so. Neither was I afraid or reluctant to get help from people who had much knowledge about cyberspace, like my brother-in-law, my research supervisor's daughter, and the learners who I taught.

Hence, it is very ironic that a person like myself, coming from the social, spiritual, and economic background I was raised in, conducted this research. This study has undoubtedly changed my perspective on technology, on issues related to gender, and mostly on life itself, which I know was worthwhile. Interacting with participants and researching them has brought me to the realisation that my role as an educator is not merely to know, judge, shame, discourage or punish, but to be open-minded, to guide, teach, address, resolve, recommend, embrace, and mostly to inspire.

Abstract

The use of social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, is common amongst schoolgirls. While SNSs provide opportunities for sexual connection, desire, and pleasure, it is also a space within which teenagers construct themselves and interact with others in the context of gender inequalities, power, and violence. This study explores teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. Drawing on post-structural feminist theory to carry out this research enabled me to garner diverse understandings and experiences of teenage girls, to conceptualise multiple positions, and to consider the fluid nature of identities.

I conducted this study amongst 30 teenage school girls aged 16-19 years who are active on Facebook. I utilised qualitative methods to collect data by adopting a blended approach, using face-to-face in-depth interviews, and a virtual group discussion on a closed Facebook group. Ethical considerations were adhered to in terms of anonymity, autonomy, obtaining informed consent, non-maleficence, and beneficence.

The findings show that teenage girls in this study understood that cyber violence is a phenomenon involving technological devices and mediums to cause harm to others, resulting in adverse consequences. Their understandings and experiences of cyber violence are grounded within gender roles and identities. Cyber violence has a powerful impact on teenage girls; however, they are also perpetrators of cyber violence, thereby demonstrating the complex ways in which they shape and reshape their identities in different contexts. In addition, the study shows how gender violence interchanges between cyberspace and physical spaces.

It is vital to consider the social construction of gender, how girls perform their femininities, and how boys enact their masculinities, within but not limited to cyberspace, given the interrelationship between cyberspace and physical spaces. There is a need not only for gender equality and balance in cyberspace but most crucially for support for the construction of positive, non-violent forms of masculinities and femininities. This research highlights the need to understand and intervene in new and developing contexts, where girls continue to be rendered vulnerable to violation.

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Chapter One: Orientation to the study

1.1 Introduction to the study

Violence is an international concern and prevails in several contexts (Bhana, 2013; Merry, 2009). In South Africa (SA), violence is regarded as endemic (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010) and is an increasing and persistent issue (Bhana, 2013). Violence manifests in various forms, including physical, sexual, verbal, and cyber violence.

Much of the research on school violence show boys as perpetrators and girls as victims (Brown, Chesney-Lind, & Stein, 2007; Eisenbraun, 2007; Parkes & Heslop, 2011; Morojele, 2009). Many researchers have focussed on gender violence, drawing on the voices of girls and their vulnerability to violence (Prinsloo, 2006; Patterson, 2012; De Lange, Mitchell, & Bhana, 2012; Froyum, 2007). Some researchers argue that girls are not merely victims of violence (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008). They also employ several violent methods to consolidate their femininities (Bhana, 2008, 2013; Leach & Humphreys, 2007; Merry, 2009; Wolpe, Quinlan, & Martinez, 1997). While it is evident that girls are vulnerable to violence, they should not be homogenised as innocent victims of violence. Nevertheless, girls and women deserve special attention (Leach, Dunne, & Salvi, 2014; Merry, 2009; Parkes, Heslop, Oando, Sabaa, Januario, & Figue, 2013; Jakobsen, 2014) given the gendered nature of violence.

Gender violence is a longstanding issue, and the worldwide #MeToo movement has not only put gender violence under the spotlight but has also shown the power of social media in raising awareness and dealing with gender violence. Violence does not only prevail in physical spaces but also in cyberspace and is becoming a worldwide concern (Srivastava, 2012). With teenagers' burgeoning use of electronic devices and increased interactions on cyber platforms, various forms of cyber violence have also increased. Like violence in physical spaces, cyber violence also occurs in many forms, which include cyberbullying, cyberstalking, sexting, cyber slut-shaming, sextortion, and cyber dating abuse. While social networking sites (SNSs) provide opportunities for sexual connection, desire, and pleasure, it is also one of the main conduits through which psychological violence is perpetrated (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016). These forms of violence reflect the myriad of nuanced ways in which perpetrators violate victims online.

On the continent of Africa, South African citizens are amongst the highest users of mobile phones and SNSs (Berger & Akshay, 2012). Most people aged 12-24 years have access to their own or a borrowed mobile phone (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009), and most youth today are active online (Lenhart, 2012). Research shows that the people most affected by cyber violence are teenagers (Tustin, Goetz, & Basson, 2012; Baird, Gruber, Cohen, Renshaw, & Yurgelun-Todd, 1999). In light of the expanded online activities of teenagers, and the ensuing risks they face, studies on cyber violence that focus on teenagers are essential. Psychologists regard the teenage years as an important phase in a person's life (Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchan, Genta, Brighi, Guarini, Smith, Thompson, & Tippett, 2012). It is also a time in a person's life when there is an expansion of social relationships outside of the family, and the quality of these relationships relate to many behavioural consequences (Mesch, 2009). Particularly, teenage girls' relationships with others form a crucial part in establishing their identity (Gilligan, 1982; Kerpelman & Smith-Adcock, 2005). From the research quoted above, it is evident that being a teenager is an intricate phase, coupled with issues such as cyber violence; their lives are complicated even further.

The use of SNSs is especially popular among young women (Barker, 2012). Furthermore, substantial research shows that the people largely affected by cyber violence are female, and teenage girls, in particular (Li, 2007; Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell & Tippett, 2008; Hemphill, Tollit, Kotevski, & Heerde, 2015; Smith, Thompson, & Davidson, 2014; Mitchell, Jones, Turner, Shattuck, & Wolak, 2016; Odora & Matoti, 2015; Payne, 2015; Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, & Daciuk, 2012; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Cross, Lester & Barnes, 2015; Tustin, Zulu, & Basson, 2014; Gorzig & Frumkin, 2013; Sourander, Brunstein, Ikonen, Lindroos, Luntamo, Koskelainen & Ristkari & Helenius, 2010; Carter & Wilson, 2015). Much research suggests that male cyberspace users violate girls online (Memoh, 2013; Mascheroni, Vincent & Jimenez, 2015; Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Idongesit, 2014). The studies cited above show that similar to violence in physical spaces, violence against girls and women by boys and men is linked to socially constructed gender norms that position women in subordinate positions to men.

However, some studies show that girls are not always victims of cyber violence but actively perpetuate it against other girls (Thompson, 2016; Tanenbaum, 2015; Poole 2014; Van Royen, 2017) and also against boys (Girlguiding, 2013; Lucero, Weisz, Smith-Darden, & Lucero, 2014). Such findings of studies contest traditional gender stereotypes and positions girls as not merely passive victims of violence but also as aggressors. Against this backdrop, this study explores teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them, as victims as well as perpetrators.

Research has shown that there are several terms to refer to cyber violence. Payne (2015) and Arntfield (2015) mention the inconsistencies about a variety of terms utilised to refer to the phenomenon. Hence, I felt that it is necessary to clarify the terminology utilised in this study. William Gibson coined the term cyberspace in 1984 (Mihalache, 2002) and defined it as "technological space that involves various contexts and mutually overlapping environments. It appears and develops in a given historical moment, marked by numerous social, cultural, political, financial, technological, and other levels" (Minic & Spalevic, 2014, p.424-425). There are several words that researchers used interchangeably to refer to the space, such as "digital", "network", "virtual" and "internet" (Minic & Spalevic, 2014). Interactive media (which are some of the tools utilised to access cyberspace) comprises electronic devices such as cell phones, computers, educational software, and video games (Van der Merwe, 2013). These tools depict some of the numerous tools that can access cyberspace. Cyberspace is, therefore, a multifaceted evolved space that developers created. Minic & Spalevic (2014, p.425) define cyber violence as that which "contains all the elements of 'regular' violence and causes real consequences even though it is committed in the so-called virtual space. The specificity of this form of violence is that it is committed through an electronic device." This definition shows that there is a relationship between cyberspace and physical spaces. Despite the association of cyberspace with the distance between people, there are adverse outcomes for victims of cyber violence.

Studies utilise multiple terms, including cyber/online/virtual/or electronic aggression/ abuse/ violence/harassment/bullying/victimisation/stalking/sexting. However, the current study espoused the umbrella term 'cyber violence' to refer to different forms of violence that prevail in cyberspace, such as cyber harassment, cyberbullying, sexting, cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse (CDA) and cyber slut-shaming. The use of multiple terms to refer to the same

phenomenon can be problematic. Nevertheless, to achieve some degree of accuracy, when referring to other studies, I utilised the terms espoused by the scholars in their studies.

1.2 Rationale underpinning the study

Given the rise of technology and increased interactions in cyberspace, cyber violence is a growing issue globally that requires attention. According to Davies & Eynon (2012), young people have embraced the benefits of cyberspace. However, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2011) claim that the well-being of young people has been compromised by greater exposure to indecent behaviour online. This assertion signals the double-edged sword nature of cyberspace, which I focus on later in this chapter.

The terms cyber violence and cyberbullying are often used interchangeably in research. IPSOS, a global research company adopted the term cyberbullying in its Global Advisor Survey on cyberbullying study (2018). The research generated data from surveying 28 countries globally and conducting 20 793 interviews between 23 March and 6 April 2018 amongst participants aged 18-64 years in the USA and Canada, and participants aged 16-64 years in all the other countries (IPSOS, 2018). The findings of the study showed that awareness of cyberbullying has increased by 9% globally from 2011. It is a positive finding. However, 1 in 4 adults has never heard about it. The percentage of parents who have a child or know a child from their community who experienced cyberbullying has increased since 2011. For example, the percentage in SA increased from 10% to 25%, in Turkey from 5% to 19%, and in the USA from 15% to 27%. This report also shows that globally, one in six parents has a child who has been a victim of cyberbullying. Globally, 51% report that classmates perpetrate cyberbullying against victims. SA has the highest prevalence of cyberbullying. These findings of the study suggest that researchers have conducted quantitative studies to determine the prevalence of this phenomenon and make it evident that cyberbullying is an international and a pressing national concern that affects young people.

A report by the Broadband Commission Gender Working Group (2015) suggests that almost three out of four female cyberspace users experience cyber violence as victims. This statistic shows that a large proportion of girls and women are vulnerable to this phenomenon. Given the violent context within which especially girls negotiate their lives, and that they are at risk online (as shown in the previous section), it is crucial to explore their understandings and experiences of cyber violence.

At the individual level, cyber violence has the potential to cause social, physical and psychological harm (Henry & Powell, 2015). Furthermore, the phenomenon of cyber violence can also extend to physical violence (Borrajo, Gamez-Guadix & Calvete, 2015), thereby compounding its adverse consequences. It has negative implications for society and the economy, such as posing threats to inclusivity, peace, prosperity and sustainable development (Broadband Commission Gender Working Group, 2015). In light of the wide-reaching adverse impact of cyber violence, both online and offline, it is imperative for research to focus on this issue.

As a teacher at Craigieburn Secondary School (pseudonym), my colleagues and I often deal with situations related to girls and cyber violence. We have been made aware by the girls in our school that those who interact in cyberspace, are either impacted negatively by cyber violence, perpetrate cyber violence, or become involved in violent physical behaviour resulting from their interactions in cyberspace. These occurrences indicate that violence in cyberspace has the potential to extend to physical spaces. From my informal conversations with girls from my school who are victims of cyber violence, I gathered that those who are victims of cyber violence sometimes miss school to avoid coming into contact with those who perpetrate violence against them. Therefore, cyber violence has implications for educational opportunities for girls and the broader goals of gender equality. It is against this backdrop that the current study focusses on cyber violence and teenage girls and seeks to foreground their voices about what causes the violence in cyberspace.

Furthermore, there have been several highly publicised issues regarding cyber violence and young women in the global and national media. I focus on some of these cases here to show its reality as a gendered and especially harmful phenomenon, which makes a critical case for why this study is important.

One such incident pertains to Brandy Vela, an 18-year-old girl from Texas in the United States of America (USA), who had enough of cyberbullies mercilessly abusing her and shot herself dead in the presence of her grandparents and parents (Naik, 2017). For years Brandy was mocked on social media by bullies about her weight, bombarded by messages of a hateful nature, referring to her as “ugly” and “fat”, leading to humiliation (Naik, 2017). This incident shows the sensitivity of young women to comments, especially about their physical appearance, and also the persistent and deadly impact of cyber violence as the victim committed suicide.

In another incident, perpetrators circulated sexual assault photos of a 17-year-old Canadian teenager, Rehtaeh Parsons. In response to this, she committed suicide. Rehtaeh's mother claimed that a boy took these photographs of her daughter during the assault in November 2011, and it led to the perpetrators bullying her for months after the pictures went viral. Police authorities arrested two young men in connection with the case; one got charged for distributing child pornography, and the other for making and distributing child pornography. The perpetrators were minors at the time the alleged crimes took place, and the evidence was insufficient in meeting the threshold for sexual assault charges (eNews Channel Africa, 2013). Hence, it is evident that there are cases where the images of teenage girls are publically tainted. They face continuous harassment for being projected negatively and take drastic measures such as self-harm, as they are unable to continue bearing the humiliation.

In April 2018, 17-year-old Paris Brown, who was the United Kingdom's (UK)'s first Youth Police and Crime Commissioner, resigned due to complaints about her derogatory tweets. She sent some of the tweets just after she turned 14 (De Groot, 2017). This case depicts how girls perpetrate cyber violence and as shown here, how digital footprints may harm the future lives of teenagers, including perpetrators. Hence, girls should not be homogenised as victims of cyber violence.

In National Media too, there have been countless cases about cyber violence and teenage girls in particular. One of which concerns the 2017 South African Idols winner, Paxton Fielies (aged 18), who was targeted by a Facebook page that cyberbullied her about her physical appearance and social background, due to her growing up in Bishop Lavis. Bishop Lavis is a community on the Cape Flats in Western Cape, SA. In this community, there are issues such as gangsterism, poverty and inequality. Nasty memes made of Paxton were tagged "SuZPekT" (suspect). This case shows that cyber violence relates to issues of social class.

Furthermore, it also suggests that people judge celebrities and target them online, making visible the double-edged sword effect of being popular. Paxton commented that she was grateful for the support of her fans who defended and supported her against the perpetrators. She is currently the face of the Western Cape's Department of Education (DoE) anti-bullying campaign. Paxton stated that while she learnt to deal with such issues, it always bothered her due to other young people finding it difficult to deal with cyberbullying (Kekana, 2018). In comparison to Rehtaeh Parsons and Brandy Vela, Paxton chose to adopt a more positive outlook to the violence she faced by working on awareness campaigns to assist other young

people which shows her resilience and agency. It shows that bystanders have the potential to positively or negatively shape victims' perceptions of the incident and the way they begin to view themselves.

In an occurrence in Free State, SA, a 16-year-old teenage girl was charged for creating and circulating pornography after her father confiscated her mobile phone as a punishment for her walking out of church (Wagner, 2015). Her father took her phone to the police after he discovered sexually explicit material, such as videos and photographs, which she sent to teenage boys at her school. She pleaded guilty to the charges against her, and two years later she was cleared of them. The social worker presented a report at the court, and it reflected that the teenager grew up in a home where her grandmother was a heavy drinker of alcohol and that she had to take care of herself. There was much opposition from various stakeholders, who felt that the outcome was an injustice to the child, and the court failed in providing clarity about how to deal with sexting issues amongst children. This incident emphasises that teenage girls exercise power online. Furthermore, it is essential to understand the harsh impact of socio-economic challenges on young people's lives.

The mentioned cases suggest that cyber violence prevails both globally and nationally. It relates to what Livingstone, Kirwall, Ponte & Staksrud (2014) recognise as forms of cyber violence prevailing, such as cyberbullying, cyberstalking, hate speech and relational aggression which demonstrates the multiple ways that perpetrators violate online. In response to cyber violence incidences in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), KZN Member of the Executive Council for Education, Mthandweni Dlungwane, remarked that South African society is violent. Furthermore, schools being a microcosm of society results in social ills like violence also prevailing in schools (Khanyile, 2018). The prevalence of violence places learners and teachers at risk of harm.

1.3 The problem statement.

Some studies focussed on the advantages of cyberspace to its users (Mathew & Ali, 2016; Thelwall & Vis, 2017; Boyd, 2014). Many other studies have focussed on the negative impact of cyber violence (Ang, 2015; Baldry, Farrington, & Sorrentino, 2015; Citron & Franks, 2014; Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015; Weinstein & Selman, 2016; Flach & Deslandes, 2017). Researchers have done considerable research on the benefits of cyberspace, the prevalence of cyber violence, and its impact. However, there is a paucity of literature that draws on the voices

of teenage girls in attempting to explore their understandings of cyber violence and what they see as the reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst them.

The research cited in this chapter shows that teenage girls spend much of their time on social networking sites. While online platforms provide new spaces for them to experiment and express their sexualities, they are also spaces in which girls experience power and domination. In a context where violence against girls and women is normalised, it is essential to privilege the voices of teenage girls in an exploration of how they understand and experience cyber violence. Furthermore, exploring teenage girls' understandings about reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst them is significant in the planning of interventions for its reduction.

Planning of interventions are necessary as a report by the Broadband Commission Gender Working Group (2015, p.26) states that:

> while the internet is a potential engine of equality, it has also often reinforced the power imbalances of offline realities; escalating cyber VAWG (Violence against Women and Girls) which is one indicator that further cements and magnifies unequal power relations between men and women.

As a result of such gender inequalities, it is vital to study teenage girls,' especially in contexts characterised by high levels of physical violence.

1.4 Research objectives

The main objectives underpinning this research study are:

1. To explore what teenage girls understand as cyber violence.

2. To gain insight into how teenage girls experience cyber violence.

3. To understand the reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

1.5 Key research questions

The key research questions in this research study are as follows:

1. What are teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence?

2. How do teenage girls experience cyber violence?

3. Why does cyber violence prevail amongst teenage girls?

1.6 Cyberspace: A double-edged sword

Scholars have drawn attention to a variety of benefits and risks that cyber technology is associated with, which I focus on below, as it is necessary to consider how cyberspace can be both valuable and detrimental. Positioning cyberspace as merely a negative space prevents people from recognising its valuable nature. On the other hand, painting this space as solely positive fails to take into account and deal with the risks that prevail.

Technological advancements are becoming faster and more accessible to its users across the globe (Kritzinger, 2017). These advancements reflect its efficiency. Even in the remotest parts of the world, technology plays an instrumental role. It helps us to access information and "assists us in telling our stories, hearing those of others, and spreading mass messaging on positive social norms, but can also be used to silence" (Haylock, Cornelius, Malunga & Mbandazayo, 2016, p.241). This assertion shows its double-edged sword nature.

Technology has a social function in teenagers' lives (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010); it interests them, and they possess greater online savvy than the generations before them, so they embrace change and technology (Van der Merwe, 2013). According to Walker (2014), Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Voxer, Line, Keek, Talkatone, and HeyTell are the most commonly utilised SNSs. I drew upon Walker's list and SNSs that participants in my study regarded as popular to inform my decision about the SNSs that I will include in this section. I decided to include Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp – followed by two SNSs which have been portrayed negatively by the media, that is, Yik Yak and Qoohme.

Brandes & Levin's (2014) study amongst Israeli girls showed that Facebook is not only a valuable space to maintain and enrich friendships; it also displays good friendship skills in terms of popularity. It suggests evidence of cyberspace being useful in the formation of

relationships. Participants in Brandes & Levin's (2014) study stated that girls post self-indulgent or sexual photos of themselves. It reflects how cyberspace is a vehicle for sexual agency, desire, and pleasure where girls create a new representation of gender and agency—this positions girls as agents in the cyber world.

Another popular SNS utilised by teenagers is Twitter. Twitter serves as a micro-blogging platform, which allows users to connect to or follow individuals they may not have a relationship with in real life, such as politicians, celebrities, and organisations (Jin & Phua, 2014). Cyberspace users also utilise it for educational purposes (Mathew & Ali, 2016; Al Musawi, Al Hashmi, Kazem, Al Busaidi & Al Khaifi, 2014; Shariff, 2008). Hence, Twitter is utilised by the youth for social and learning purposes. WhatsApp can allow users convenient and easy ways of communicating (Mathew & Ali, 2016). However, it also raises concerns amongst users about protection and exchanging private information (Mathew & Ali, 2016). Hence, cyberspace users may choose to interact on SNSs which suit their preferences.

There is further evidence of the valuable nature of cyberspace. Trisha Prabhu (13), saddened and angered by the suicide of a 12-year-old learner who was cyberbullied by classmates, invented an application that would help teenagers to think twice before posting hurtful messages online. Her Rethink software flags potentially offensive content before posting it online. During the trial run, 93% of teenagers had second thoughts about texts and decided not to send the message. Prabhu won numerous awards for Rethink (De Groot, 2017). Hence, cyberspace should not be classified homogenously as a negative space due to the countless benefits that it offers its users. It also suggests that while teenage girls are largely affected by cyber violence, they also use their proficiency in the cyber world to create applications. Some of these applications can serve as a preventative measure against online risks. This initiative is evidence of progression and useful measures to deal with the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, dangers prevail online and complicate matters. The introduction and popularity of Facebook in SA has created possibilities for the exposure of young children to sexual predators (Van der Merwe, 2013). Furthermore, Van der Merwe (2013) states that SNSs instigate violent behaviour, which has been common amongst learners in SA in recent years. These actions reflect how people misuse cyberspace.

SNSs is also associated with teenagers who have run away from home to meet someone they have met online (Van der Merwe, 2013). Hence, it is evident that cyber interactions are not confined to cyberspace, which creates risk for its users, even offline. While technology empowers people with information, it also strips many people of their rights to privacy and reputation (Cheung, 2009). The double-edged sword nature of cyberspace is evident.

The SNS Yik Yak enabled anonymous sharing with people in close proximity and shut down due to what an insider describes as the company facing problems related to bullying and harassment and not being able to combat this (De Groot, 2017). It depicts its hazardous nature and difficulties in dealing with such risks. Another SNS that has been viewed as risky to users and is particularly popular with young girls is Qoohme (De Groot, 2017). In a media report, a particular girl mentioned why she liked to be on Qoohme: "because it's really nice when somebody says something good. So, it's worth being told 60 times you're a fat slut and go kill yourself, for that one time some random person you don't know says you're beautiful." This statement portrays that the formation of teenagers' identities and their self-worth is determined by how others perceive them on SNSs.

Popovac & Leoschut (2012) state that there have been various national and international interventions to ensure the safety of cyberspace users, such as DoE e-safety guidelines, filtering software to block out harmful content, safety messages and age restrictions. However, cyber violence continues. The prevalence of cyber violence raises questions about the effectiveness of such mechanisms. Furthermore, the South African Constitution [Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996], and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promote freedom of speech and expression as individuals' rights. Such rights result in people misusing cyberspace by utilising it as a tool to bully, harass, and abuse people (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). It also shows that while legislative frameworks attempt to be progressive and allow people rights, they may also be limited in protecting people from harm committed by others.

Furthermore, law-making bodies have not kept up with the trends and pace of developing technologies concerning sexting, especially non-consensual and unauthorised distribution of material (Henry & Powell, 2015). It is glaring that loopholes in legislative frameworks hamper the progress of legal action against perpetrators. Nevertheless, one of the significant attempts to curb issues of cyber violence is the Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Bill of 2017, which is a revised version of the 2015 Bill, and was introduced to SA to provide an organised approach to fight Cybercrime (Republic of South Africa, 2017).

1.7 Significance of the study

Violence, in all its forms, deserves intense attention. With the growing use of SNSs, cyberspace is proving to be yet another space within which teenage girls are becoming vulnerable to being violated in various ways. For interventions to be effective, it is critical to privilege the voices of teenage girls in exploring how they understand and experience cyber violence and what they see as the causes.

The current study interrogates teenage girls' understandings about cyber violence, the forms that it prevails in, who its victims and perpetrators are, and its relationship to physical violence. It gleaned insight into how teenage girls experience cyber violence as victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. Furthermore, the study explored reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls, which participants attributed mostly to online performances of gender.

The findings from this research may benefit parents/guardians and educators concerning their pastoral role and also guide researchers about the dynamics of cyber violence, which are prevalent amongst teenage girls. While I did not specially design this research as an intervention, the feminist research methodology employed has the potential to raise awareness about the experiences of cyber violence. In this way, it can increase teenage girls' capacity to identify and address cyber violence in their own lives. Improving the understandings of cyber violence will play a role in assisting teenagers in engaging in and promoting safe practices in cyberspace. This study highlights the need not only for gender equality and balance in cyberspace but most crucially for support for the construction of positive, non-violent forms of masculinities and femininities. It emphasises the need to understand and intervene in new and developing contexts, where girls continue to be rendered vulnerable to violation.

1.8 Location

I selected the teenage girls who participated in this study from Craigieburn Secondary School (pseudonym), a multi-racial school on the South Coast of KZN, SA. I chose this research site because of convenience. I teach at the school and live within the community, so I have already developed trusting relationships with the teenage girls at the school. At the time of data generation, most participants interacted in cyberspace daily. The popular SNS was Facebook. Hence, teenage girls who interacted on Facebook were selected. I created a special Facebook group to generate data.

1.9 Theoretical approach

In this study of teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence, their experiences with cyber violence, and reasons for its prevalence amongst them, theories of gender are significant. It is crucial to understand how gender power and gender identities shape and are shaped by teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence. Hence, this study is underpinned by feminist post-structural (FPS) theory, together with theories on the social construction of gender.

Gender is socially constructed (Connell, 2000), and societal norms dictate that individuals are to conduct themselves according to specific gender norms for men and women, respectively. From the early years, boys and girls are socialised in particular ways. There are expectations for boys to exhibit masculine characteristics, such as aggression and dominance. At the same time, there are expectations for girls to conform to specific feminine qualities such as inferiority, passivity, and to be objects of sexual desire. Therefore, individuals internalise socially expected gender norms. These gender roles lead to a heightening of gender inequalities in various spaces and ultimately create a particular gender order. This theory is useful to this study as interactions in cyberspace, like in physical spaces, are very much influenced by socially constructed gender norms, which contribute to cyberspace users conducting themselves in certain ways which normalise gendered notions.

I also utilised Weedon's (1987) FPS theory to frame this study. FPS pays close attention to how participants narrate their experiences. It shifts how power is examined. FPS examines social processes and how they shape our subjectivities. Language is also an important aspect and enables people to express their meanings about their experiences. I discuss these concepts in detail in chapter three. FPS challenges binary ways of understanding the world and emphasises the dignity and rights of an individual. Hence, it is suitable to frame this study, as cyberspace is a subjective space where multiple power relations are operating. Identities online are fluid and ever-changing, giving rise to particular interactions. Individuals online are not necessarily passive but are active and exercise choices about how they position themselves to others online, either with their own identities or fake ones. Language is an essential feature due to interactions occurring online in written or verbal form. In particular, gender relations are accepted, challenged, or reproduced due to power, language, knowledge construction, and social processes.

1.10 Methodology and methods of research

This research is located in the critical paradigm since it is connected to power dynamics in social structures and takes a closer look at individuals and situations surrounding social positioning (Martens, 2015). I adopted a qualitative approach to generating data. This approach is suitable for conducting a study on cyber violence, which draws on teenage girls' rich and in-depth understandings and experiences of the phenomenon and why it prevails amongst them.

I decided that researching an online phenomenon using an online method would be appropriate and enhance data generation, but would not be sufficient to respond to the critical questions of this study. I was aware that cyber violence is a sensitive issue, and asking participants particular questions about it online could create possibilities for risks and ethical dilemmas. It was also important to consider how face-to-face methods garner rich textual data, due to social encounters like interviews providing avenues to do so. I, therefore, adopted a blended approach to data generation. A blended approach is the use of research methodologies online and offline to generate data. I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter Four.

I adopted two methods of data generation: individual face-to-face interviews with each teenage girl and a virtual group discussion with all 30 teenage girls who participated. I utilised purposive sampling as it focusses on gathering data from information-rich participants based on the aims of the study (Maree, 2007), and the teenage girls studied interacted online and had information about cyber violence. I also employed snowball sampling, whereby I requested the initial participants sampled for assistance to locate other girls who utilised Facebook, as they possibly shared friendship groups, both online and offline. I adhered to ethical considerations set out by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011). Being an Indian middle-class young woman and a secondary school educator as well as a researcher raises several implications for both this study and my position as a teacher. In Chapter Four, I discuss how I managed my positionality in the research.

Once data generation was complete, I transcribed the face-to-face interviews and formulated a data transcript from the virtual group discussion. The transcripts were read and re-read, and after that, coded into units according to the research questions. Cohen, Manion & Morrision (2011) state that this process is essential in data reduction. I analysed data using thematic analysis, which Guest, Macqueen & Namey (2011) regard as ideal in identifying and describing implicit and explicit ideas emerging from the data.

1.11 Overview of the chapters

In Chapter One, I presented the introduction and background to the research by exploring a research area that is still in its infancy: cyber violence amongst teenage girls. I stated the rationale, objectives, research questions of this study and the problem statement. I then drew attention to cyberspace being positioned as both a positive and negative space, followed by the significance of this study. I mentioned the location, the theoretical framework, and outlined the research methodology that was applied to this study, followed by an overview of the chapters.

In Chapter Two, I synthesise literature relevant to cyber violence and young people, then young women in particular. I conclude by focussing on the implications of the literature review for the current study.

Chapter Three begins by drawing attention to what a theory is, followed by the social construction of gender and how gender power operates to create a particular gender order. I then focus on FPS and its characteristics and justification for my theoretical choices.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the research methodology adopted to conduct this study. I explore the research context, location, paradigm, sampling and the instruments utilised. I focus on the methods of data generation, that is, individual face-to-face interviews and a virtual group discussion. I draw attention to ethical considerations, rigour, research challenges, and reflexivity. I also point out the limitations of this study.

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I present and analyse the findings generated from this research, utilising thematic analysis, in terms of the themes that emerged.

Chapter Five explores the understandings of the teenage girls who participated in this study about cyber violence, its forms, victim and perpetrator identities, and the relationship of cyber violence to physical violence. Participants regard cyber violence as damaging and mostly negatively impacting upon girls, but also affecting boys. Hence, it is not limited to specific individuals.

In Chapter Six, I present and analyse data related to how teenage girls experience cyber violence. I gathered that teenage girls experience, witness, and perpetrate cyber violence in multiple forms which suggest that girls assume multiple identities online. Teenage girls'

experiences of cyber violence extend to physical spaces and vice versa, rendering them vulnerable to harm in cyberspace and physical spaces, which compounds matters.

Within Chapter Seven, I explore reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls. Participants stated multiple reasons, such as the influence of social contexts and particular ways of using online spaces, depicting how online and offline issues spark cyber violence. There are coercive expectations for teenage girls to perpetrate cyber violence which propagates violent attitudes. Cyber violence occurs, most conspicuously, due to gendered performances online.

Chapter Eight is the concluding chapter. I summarise the insights from this study, followed by the implications of this research.

1.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an introduction and background to this study. I stated the rationale, research objectives, research questions and the problem statement. I focussed on cyberspace as a double-edged sword and the significance of this research. I pointed out the location, the theories underpinning this study, the research methodology and gave an overview of the chapters of this dissertation.

In the next chapter, I review literature about cyber violence and young people.

Chapter Two: Synthesis of literature about cyber violence, gender, and young people

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review literature that is relevant to exploring teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. This chapter begins with a focus on international and national literature on violence, gendered school violence and then cyber violence as a global phenomenon. The rest of the review includes a synthesis of global, continental and national studies related to cyber violence amongst young people. Subsequently, I focus on the implications of the literature reviewed, bringing the chapter to a close.

2.2 Violence: A global concern

Violence is a broad issue, and cyber violence is a category in this spectrum. According to the World Health Organisation (2013), violence is deliberately using physical power, which could result in or create possibilities of causing damage, death, psychological damage, deprivation and maldevelopment. As stated in Chapter One, violence prevails globally in numerous forms and diverse social contexts (Bhana, 2013; Merry, 2009); hence it is a concern (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). The USA experiences challenges related to increasing violence (Kimmel, 2004). Research in the UK highlights that violence amongst the youth is at a high level and involves extreme forms which are on the rise (Office for National Statistics, 2013). Violence is also an issue in Africa (Dunne & Ananga, 2013), with violence being rampant in SA (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). It is, therefore, evident that violence is a challenge in developed and developing nations globally. In SA, researchers found that teenagers experience high levels of violence (Gender Links, 2012; Seedat, Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, & Ratele 2009; Swart, Seedat, Stevens, & Ricardo, 2002). The findings of these studies make it necessary for teenagers to be studied. However, despite youth experiences of violence, they resist classifying behaviours as violent (Burton, Kitzinger, Kelly & Regan, 1998). It is possibly due to them downplaying such incidents.

According to Paechter (1998), the social construction of gender posits that boys and men have greater access to enacting and embodying power than girls. This social construction shows evidence of unequal power relations. Hence, despite violent acts arising from racism or issues of class, researchers state that it is always gendered (Bhana, 2009; Leach, Dunne & Salvi, 2014;

Merry, 2009; Parkes et al., 2013). Therefore, the current study espouses a position that all violence is gendered.

Violence is a complex phenomenon, and there is no single cause for it. Scholars inside and outside of SA maintain that there is an intersection of violence with dynamics like race and class (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Mills, 2001; Morrell, 2001a). Bhana (2012) attributes violence to factors such as political, economic and cultural power combining with male dominance and the subordination of women. South Africa has a long history that has been entrenched by the previous oppressive Apartheid regime. South African researchers have shown the contextualisation of violence in deeply rooted issues of male privilege and the societal impact of the Apartheid era (Wood, Lambert, & Jewkes, 2007). During the Apartheid era in SA, racism and sexism were propagated by the government to 'control' the country. It is vital to refer to this tumultuous historical period due to its impact on our country and the violent scars that remain.

Studies show that boys are the main perpetrators of violence, and girls are the main victims of it (Brown, Chesney-Lind, & Stein, 2007; Eisenbraun, 2007; Parkes & Heslop, 2011). Violence mainly affects girls and women across cultures in economic, sexual, physical and psychological forms (Minerson, Cardo, Dinner, & Jones, 2011). This impact shows their vulnerability to violence and makes visible why they should be studied.

Some researchers present counter-arguments. Bhana (2008), for example, contends that in an African context of poverty, war, economic and social turmoil, mainly African girls and women are most visible as resilient in the face of economic and social challenges. They were active in organising and supporting violence during the turbulent times of racial oppression and resistance in SA (Gasa, 2007). Girls are not merely passive and victims of violence (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008). Daily, girls face violence in their lives, which they escape, negotiate, and participate in (Bhana, 2008). They consolidate their femininities in various ways (Bhana, 2008, 2013; Leach & Humphreys, 2007; Merry, 2009; Wolpe, Quinlan, & Martinez, 1997). These studies highlight the agency of women

Renold & Barter (2003) suggest that masculinities are continually associated with violence, which underestimates girls' ability to participate in violence, exacerbating matters. Due to the gruesome images of violence in SA and its impact on girls, perceiving girls only as being victims of violence leads to constructions of 'good girl' and 'bad boy' discourses, which is

problematic (Bhana, 2008). Viewing girls as mere victims of violence fragments our knowledge about their experiences and gives rise to an obstructive, dichotomous way of thinking. This kind of thinking classifies girls homogenously and stereotypically. It ignores the possibilities of femininities existing in multiple forms (Bhana, 2008), as multiple forms of masculinities also prevail (Connell, 1995). For example, while girls are mainly victims of violence, boys too are vulnerable to it (Forlum, 2015; Parkes & Heslop, 2011). These research studies show that there are particular assumptions and gender stereotypes which should be dispelled. Researchers have done much work on the gendered nature of violence in physical spaces. While the current study focusses on violence in cyberspace, it is important to firstly review the literature on violence in physical spaces such as the school environment, given the findings of interrelationships between violence in cyberspace and physical spaces.

2.3 Gendered school violence

Researchers have identified various spaces wherein violence prevails. Children are exposed to gender violence at home, in neighbouring locations and at their schools (Parkes, 2007). Scholars have found that gender violence in South African schools, in particular, is a significant challenge (Bhana, 2016; Morrell, 2001b; Parkes, 2015). Researchers have recognised prominent places for manifestations of gender violence in schools such as hallways, restrooms and classrooms (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999; Bhana, 2012; Dunne, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2001). Playgrounds too are powerful sites wherein both girls and boys as gendered beings affirm and contest gender power relations through violence (Epstein, Kehily, Mac an Ghaill, & Redman, 2001). Hence, it is evident that gender violence is a concern in multiple spaces in schools and exposes learners to harm. Allen (2013) relates violence in schools to also being perpetrated through technological means, thus referring to violent forms in cyberspace. Therefore, it is essential to consider how schools are key sites wherein cyber violence is instigated.

Staff and learners in schools are exposed to gender violence such as intimidation, humiliation, harassment and other forms (Prinsloo, 2006). Gender violence also manifests itself through space appropriation, acts of corporal punishment, public ridicule and extortion (Dunne, Humphreys & Leach, 2006). Violent forms such as sexual harassment occur in several ways, including jokes and comments of a sexual nature, sexual advances, indecent exposure, unwanted physical contact, demanding sexual favours and rape (Keddie, 2009; Prinsloo, 2006) which also occurs online. Sexual harassment is a common part of school girls' lives as they

contend with harsh behaviour that includes verbal and non-verbal conduct, such as touching, looks, gestures and boys calling them demeaning names (Morojele, 2009). Schools also promote hegemonic masculinities which validate gender violence (Anderson, 2009). Boys retaliate when they face violent situations, as they regard engaging in gender violence as a mark of bravery, strength and social status (Parkes, 2007). These studies highlight that violence is a gendered phenomenon which occurs in various ways. Cyber violence too takes numerous forms which I draw attention to later in this chapter. Hence, it is vital to research violent forms which are not only prevalent in physical spaces but also in cyberspace.

Haber (2004) posits that violence prevails in schools because school authorities fail to intervene. The lack of intervention is attributed to a normalisation of such acts or due to a lack of control over the situation. Complexities regarding the reporting of violence complicate matters. In instances where victims hold the belief that safety and security service providers might not believe them, they may choose to refrain from reporting cases of victimisation (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). While evidence of cyber violence can be saved or logged, victims also have negative attitudes to reporting it. In terms of gender, Artz, Burton, Ward, Leoschut, Phyfer, Kassanjee & Mottee (2016) state that especially young men are inclined not to report all types of abuse experienced, rendering them vulnerable to risks. This lack of reporting can be associated with traditional gender roles, such as wanting to reflect a macho and brave image.

Gender violence has numerous consequences. Gender violence in schools compromises the safety and protection of learners (Leach, Dunne, & Salvi, 2014). Acts such as corporal punishment infringe upon the rights of victims, are abusive, harmful, and promote violence (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2011). Burman, Brown & Bachelor (2003) remark that violence is not only related to physical harm inflicted but may also include psychological and emotional distress. Sexual harassment results in trauma (Fineran & Bolen, 2006).

Girls become frustrated, infuriated and anxious owing to countless experiences of harassment at school, mostly sexual (Keddie, 2009). Changing schools and becoming absentminded are consequences of being sexually harassed in schools (Keddie, 2009; Muhanguzi, 2011). Gender violence in and out of school environments significantly affects the educational participation of young people and gender equality (Leach, Dunne, & Salvi, 2014). Gender violence threatens global development and has lasting, devastating consequences on victims (Pinheiro, 2006). This literature suggests that the impact of gender violence is multifaceted and affects

individuals, institutions, society and the world at large. Cyber violence is also associated with similar consequences, and I include this later in the discussion.

Forlum's (2015) research focussed on the forms of gendered school violence. She carried out this study in a school in KZN, by conducting individual interviews, FGDs and observations amongst male and female respondents aged 15-17 years. Various forms of gender violence enacted by boys against girls were frequent in school spaces, emphasising male domination. However, Forlum (2015) reported that girls were not merely victims of boys' aggressive behaviour but also engaged in violating other girls, and in some instances were violent towards boys. Girl-on-girl violence occurred in the form of verbal confrontations, name-calling and physical assault, which participants attributed to gossiping and fights over boys, in an attempt to consolidate their femininities. It is therefore noticeable that violence that boys perpetrate against girls differs from how girls violate girls as boys adopt more physical methods of violence compared to girls, reflecting traditional gender roles. While some girls were agentic and rejected violence from their boyfriends, others believed that boys' violent reactions towards girls were justifiable in cases where girls behaved in ways that people regarded as socially undesirable. Most of the male participants in the study condoned lesbianism. Still, they were annoyed with those who were gay, as they considered boys who behaved in ways that opposed the dominant constructions of masculinity as being a disgrace to men, thus showing double standards. These double standards are prevalent in cyberspace, girl-on-girl and boy-on-girl, suggesting that particular forms of gender violence are not limited to physical spaces.

Respondents in Forlum's (2015) research expected school authorities and educators to ensure that schools are safe and conducive to learning. However, they claimed that educators lacked genuine concern about gender violence that was reported and failed to intervene in situations to address gender violence. In this way, violence is promoted instead of reduced. It has negative implications for victims and the learning environment as a whole.

Participants in Forlum's (2015) study stated that instead of the perpetrators, it was the victims of gender violence who were punished and blamed for being violated, aggravating the situation. The study emphasised how the gendered nature of school spaces breeds violence due to gender inequalities and power. Gender violence, being a rampant societal issue amongst the youth, makes it necessary that such areas are researched, not only regarding physical spaces but including cyberspace. One of the reasons for this is the rise of technology and innovations such as SNSs being a trend (Kamaku & Mberia, 2014).

2.4 Cyber violence: A global phenomenon

In Chapter One, I defined the term cyberspace. Furthermore, I mentioned various interchangeable terminology that scholars used to refer to aspects related to cyberspace and cyber violence. In this chapter, I emphasise comments made by Payne (2015) and Arntfield (2015) that there are inconsistencies in terminology and definitions, which is a problem. For example, as I read through the studies conducted, it came to my attention that researchers used a variety of terms, such as "cyber", "digital", "online", "social media", "virtual", and "electronic" to refer to that space. Therefore, I iterate that for this literature review, I utilised the terminology adopted by scholars in their studies; however, for the current study, I utilised the umbrella term "cyber violence" to refer to multiple forms of violence existing in cyberspace. The reason for this is due to cyber violence being a broader term to refer to the phenomenon.

In SA, there is a high usage of mobile phones and SNSs and increased online access (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). Payne (2015) asserts that a large number of South African citizens lack access to electricity and water, but they have mobile phones. This finding points out that social deprivation of necessities does not necessarily suggest a lack of access to technology. New devices and services are regularly released (Payne, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to research online threats due to the evolvements in cyberspace.

In particular, most teenagers have access to mobile phones which either belong to them or are borrowed (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). They are major users of technology, including SNSs (Stonard, Bowen, Walker, & Price, 2015). Social media is important to young people (Tripathi, 2017) and information and communication technology (ICT) is especially popular amongst them as it offers them privacy (Chun & Friedland, 2015). Furthermore, they immerse themselves in sending and receiving texts (Lenhart, Smith, Anderson, Duggan, & Perrin, 2015). A large percentage of learners sleep with their mobile phones under their pillow to avoid missing texts (Steeves, 2015). Gouws (2014) and Herther (2009) posit that the current generation of youth are experts when it comes to technological gadgets and their uses. These studies suggest that technology is a prominent part of young people's lives and also shows their particular usage of technological devices. However, teenagers expect and accept cyberbullying (Baker & Helm, 2010). Hence, there should be studies done about cyber violence amongst teenagers as they face various risk factors related to their online interactions.

Globally, cyber violence is becoming a concern for children, parents, teachers, school authorities and governments (Srivastava, 2012). Thus, it affects many groups of a population. Forms of cyber violence are a growing problem in the continents of Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe, North and South America and Antarctica (Chisholm, 2014), which corresponds with Chukwuere & Chukwuere's (2017) assertion that cyberbullying is a social ill in developed and developing parts of the world. Besides, it is an occurrence which shows no signs of disappearing soon (Davison & Stein, 2014). Aggression in online spaces is not merely physical bullying that perpetrators orchestrate with new tools; it is a devastating, widespread phenomenon that has no downtime (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011). Cyber violence is also a national concern which has been common amongst South African learners in recent years (Van der Merwe, 2013).

As highlighted in Chapter One, teenagers are the group who mainly experience cyber violence (Tustin, Goetz, & Basson, 2012; Baird et al., 1999) and should be studied. Patton, Hong, Ranney, Patel, Kelley, Eschmann & Washington (2014) claim that frequently being exposed to violence online has a negative impact on children and teenagers. This positions young people as affected by cyber violence. In terms of age and gender, teenagers are afraid of perpetrators who are unknown, male or older (Henson, Reyns, & Fisher 2013; Pereira & Matos, 2015). These research studies show the association of particular people with perpetrating cyber violence. However, cyberbullying is not a one-way street, as perpetrators of cyber violence are also victims (Erdur-Baker, 2010; Li, 2007; Gerson & Rappaport, 2011). It is, therefore, important to recognise that multiple identities operate online. In light of this, perpetrator identities should not be homogenised. I focus on perpetrator identities in detail later in this chapter.

The internet is a gendered space (Hall, 1996; Plant, 2000; Gajjala, 2000; Munt, 2001; Clark, 2007; White, 2003; Senft, 2008). This finding reflects that cyberspace has particular implications for male and female cyberspace users' interactions online. Cyberspace is founded culturally upon notions that conform to patriarchy (Gajjala, 2000) which is related to gender inequalities due to male domination over women. As stated in Chapter One, extensive research has found that most of the victims of cyber violence are teenage girls (Li, 2007; Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009; Smith et al., 2008; Hemphill et al., 2015; Smith, Thompson, & Davidson, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2016; Odora & Matoti, 2015; Payne, 2015; Mishna et al., 2012; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Cross, Lester, & Barnes, 2015; Tustin, Zulu, & Basson, 2014; Gorzig &

Frumkin, 2013; Sourander et al., 2010; Carter & Wilson, 2015). These gendered findings of studies show evidence of girls' heightened vulnerability to violence and allude to the negative impact it has on them.

Despite this, as I showed in Chapter One, it is also important to recognise studies which demonstrate that girls are perpetrators of cyber violence (Thompson, 2016; Tanenbaum, 2015; Poole 2014; Miliford, 2013; Ging & O'Higgins Norman, 2016; Lucero et al., 2014; Girlguiding, 2013; Perry, 2015; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; Armstrong, Hamilton, Armstrong & Seeley, 2014). These studies challenge traditionally held gender stereotypes and make it necessary to study girls as they are not merely victims of violence. As presented in Chapter One, many researchers found that male cyberspace users perpetrate cyber violence against girls (Memoh, 2013; Mascheroni, Vincent & Jimenez, 2015; Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Idongesit, 2014). It highlights the exercise of male power and supports the large body of research on physical violence. Some research suggests that male cyberspace users are violated online by girls (Girlguiding, 2013; Lucero et al., 2014). The findings of these studies challenge traditionally held gendered notions and positions girls as agents of violence.

There is also research which shows that cyber violence occurs equally amongst girls and boys (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011) and across adolescence (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015). Some studies detected no significant gender differences concerning cyber violence (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Willams & Guerra, 2007; Bauman, 2010; Campbell, 2005; Tustin, Zulu, & Basson, 2014). Few studies found no gender differences (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Wright & Li, 2013; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004, 2007). Nevertheless, the findings of the studies above highlight that research regarding the gendered aspect vary. I return to the gendered nature of cyber violence later in this chapter.

2.5 An overview of international and national studies about cyber violence

In this section, I review international and national research on cyber violence amongst young people. While I reviewed the studies thematically, there is considerable overlap in the findings of the studies. It is important to note that the studies I reviewed mostly focus on teenagers. However, in certain instances, I reviewed studies involving respondents older or younger than the age of the participants in the current research as the studies focussed on cyber violence.

2.5.1 Forms of cyber violence and mediums of perpetration

There are several risks online and multiple avenues to perpetrate cyber violence. Sabella, Patchin & Hinduja (2013) state that there is an increase of risks online. It is essential to understand the mediums of perpetration and forms of violence as it influences the nature of the harm that perpetrators inflict on victims. Violence online occurs through "emails, cell phones, pagers, instant messaging, short message services, internet chatrooms, blogs, forums, social network websites, websites and cameras" (Beyazit, Şimşek, & Ayhan, 2017, p.1512). Cyber violence also occurs through pictures and video clips (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). These statements show that there are a variety of cyber mediums which become sites of violence. Social media exposes especially young people to viruses, predators and narcissistic attitudes (ProCon, 2013). Bloggers are also at risk of being harassed due to sharing views related to controversial issues (Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2008). In Paula Todd's (2014) book *Extreme mean: Trolls, Bullies and predators online*, she blames SNSs like Twitter, YouTube and Facebook for girls and women being disproportionately affected by cyber violence. It is noticeable that particular cyberspaces are positioned in a negative way due to the risks that prevail therein, harming the youth, and in particular female cyberspace users.

Some scholars found that online games were risky avenues for young people. Lam, Cheng & Liu (2013) steered a Chinese-based study employing cross-sectional surveys amongst 1278 male and female participants between the ages of 14-16 years. They illustrated that participants who were moderately or severely exposed to violent online games were most likely to be victimised online and involved in cyberbullying. Furthermore, verbal abuse emerges from online games (Kwak, Doha, Blackburn, & Han, 2017). From their research amongst 230 students and 72 teachers, Umesh, Ali, Farzana, Bindal & Aminath (2018) identified that online video games had established rules against violence. However, the violence prevails as a result of users losing online games or being annoyed with other players and wanting to vent. These findings of the studies show the negative effect of online games due to the aggression that it fosters.

Scholars classify cyber violence as occurring in different forms. Forms of cyber violence such as cyber harassment occur through methods such as repeatedly phoning, sending unwanted messages, and utilising cyberspace to harass and post derogatory and defamatory content to provoke a person (Willard, 2004). Furthermore, access to pornographic material contributes to online harassment (Hope, 2006). Li (2007) mentions that cyberbullying frequently occurs by

utilising more than one type of medium, which compounds risks. Olumide, Adams & Amodu (2015) administered a study in Nigeria amongst 653 male and female respondents between the ages of 14-22 years, utilising surveys and in-depth interviews. The scholars also determined that perpetrators harass victims through various mediums online. These findings of the studies reflect how perpetrators use different mediums to violate online, which link to contextual factors.

Srivastava (2012) expounds that a range of harmful activities falls under the category of cyber violence, that is, stalking, passing sexual remarks, and the use of vulgar language. A categorisation noted by Burton & Mutongwizo (2009) included flaming, denigrating, excluding, impersonating, tricking, and outing. In their list of cyber violations, Burgess-Proctor, Patchin & Hinduja (2008) and Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho & Tippett (2006) included slandering and defaming. Bumpas (2015) and Chisholm (2014) state that cyber violence occurs in the form of entitlement, retaliation and bystander behaviour. The VAW (Violence against Women) Learning Network (2013) claims that forms of cyber violence include hacking, surveillance, and malicious distribution, including revenge pornography and doxing. Doxing is revealing aspects of a person's offline identity in online spaces, especially private information (Crooks, 2018) with malicious intent and threatening them (Mantilla, 2013). Backe, Lilleston & McCleary-Sills (2018) suggest that cyber violence tactics include happy slapping (videos and photographs taken for distribution online at a later stage), sexting and tracking. These studies illustrate the nuanced ways that perpetrators use to violate victims online.

A large percentage of people who are sexual rights advocates are violently threatened online in the form of intimidation, censorship, blocking and filtering (Sívori & Zilli, 2013). "Catfishing" or social media misrepresentation and manipulation prevails in a large number of incidents (D'Costa, 2014). Young people are more susceptible to catfishing and manipulation compared to adults (Wittes, Poplin, Jurecic, & Spera, 2016). Hence, the youth should be studied, not just regarding catfishing but other forms of cyber violence also as these have implications for their image constructions and ultimately their reputations. "Trolling" is also a form of cyber violence which involves deceptive and destructive behaviour to disrupt an online space for no specific reason (Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014). Williams (2012) describes it as being derived from a fishing technique. Trolls are mostly male cyberspace users who terrorise, embarrass, defame and target women and girls (Mantilla, 2015; Phillips, 2015). It

shows female cyberspace users' vulnerability to male power. The studies above are evidence that researchers have identified from their studies the multiple forms of cyber violence that prevail and have categorised the forms of cyber violence in different ways.

Risk of harm includes social and digital factors (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Access to mobile phones amongst the youth is associated with risks such as sharing of pornography and solicitation (Smith, Thompson, & Davidson, 2014). Badenhorst (2011) mentions that there are risks such as identity theft and computer viruses. Online there are threats of physical violence related to hate, homophobia, death threats and threats to damage family relationships (Rivers & Noret, 2010) which show the relationship between cyberspace and physical spaces. It is glaring that online spaces are associated with a host of risks, which must be taken into account when studying cyber violence which is a multifaceted form of violence as demonstrated above.

In terms of risky online behaviour related to young people, Alao, Soderberg, Pohl & Alao (2006) declare that individuals utilise online spaces to communicate suicide ideation. Youth express their suicidal thoughts online. Cash, Thelwall, Peck, Ferrell & Bridge (2013) and Hinduja & Patchin (2010) are also amongst the scholars who iterate that social media creates possibilities for self-harm. Gangs use social media to promote gangsterism (Decary-Hetu & Morselli, 2011). Members of gangs also use online spaces to incite dares, display weapons, and so on (Patton et al., 2014), and many perpetrators make threats online before carrying them out. (Patton et al., 2014). These studies depict how people use cyberspace as a tool to commit criminal offences, resulting in physical and psychological harm.

Nordhal, Beran & Dittrick (2013) adopted the questionnaire method to study Canadian boys and girls aged 10-17 years. The researchers identified seven types of cyberbullying, such as name-calling, threatening, spreading rumours, impersonating, sending private pictures, making sexual comments, and inciting sexual behaviours. It shows how cyberspace users manipulate such spaces and use several tactics to harm victims. A common form of cyberbullying noted is the writing of mean comments on a person's post or photos online (Jones, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2013). However, Umesh et al. (2018) regard spreading rumours online as the most prevalent form of cyber violence.

En Kwan & Skoric (2013) conducted a study by including 1676 teenagers in a survey in Singapore. The scholars found that bullying on Facebook was common, in the form of insults and being threatened and tricked into revealing secrets. These research findings show the

differing findings regarding forms of cyber violence in various contexts. Participants admitted to sending nasty messages on Facebook, making someone look like a laughing stock and hacking accounts. The researchers also found that providing personal and sensitive information on Facebook placed individuals in vulnerable positions whereby perpetrators use information as ammunition for malicious intentions. This study shows that teenagers do not necessarily deny their involvement in cyber violence, possibly due to limited fear of reprisal.

By accessing the logs of 130 students aged 15-18 years from two computer laboratories in a Greek school, Lazarinis (2009) reported that the internet has educational and entertainment functions. However, it also exposes online users to dangers online. Many sites seemed legitimate, but contain harmful content such as vulgar language, sexually explicit images, racist jokes and comments. Paedophiles, sexual discrimination, online gambling, provision of fake details and identities, defamation, and stereotypical remarks, amongst others, also create possibilities for aggressive behaviour that can be detrimental. People with unethical aims and malicious intentions also misuse the internet. It is risky considering how perpetrators may falsely project themselves online. In light of this study, it is also evident that cyberspace functions as a double-edged sword which creates benefit for users but also has a detrimental effect. Willard (2002) states that people also behave unethically online, as they do not believe that they will get caught, see no harm in their actions, and see others committing such actions even though it is immoral. There were opinions amongst participants that the existence of policies for security measures fail to prevent unreliable content from being accessed (Lazarinis, 2009). It is evident that there is high-risk content online that endangers teenagers; therefore, researching the risks teenagers are exposed to is of paramount importance.

From their research conducted by administering surveys in Taiwan amongst 608 teenage boys and girls aged 13-18 years, Huang & Yang (2013) identified that most participants engaged in online misrepresentation, which is a global phenomenon. Teenagers "[present] themselves differently at home to their family than to their friends online" (Durrant, Frohlich, Sellen, & Uzzell, 2011, p.116). These representations are in keeping with how they want to be perceived by others due to online spaces allowing them to construct particular identities of themselves. Huang & Yang (2013) gathered that one of the reasons for teenagers misrepresenting themselves in online spaces was because they did not regard it as a serious problem due to multiple identities that prevail online and this possibly being a common practice online. Participants who were "driven by physical and psychological urges tended to misrepresent their

external information" (Huang & Yang, 2013, p.13). Therefore, there was a lesser degree of control and accuracy in online dating experiences. The findings of the study further showed that teenagers also chose to misrepresent themselves online to escape reality, portray multiple self-images, self-explore, improve relationships with others, gain prestige, and maintain privacy in an attempt to avoid unwanted issues. The anonymity associated with the internet can also be dangerous, as it is associated with self-disclosure and high levels of intimacy, whereby young people are being deceived more in online spaces than older people. Online misrepresentation is, therefore, a factor that may contribute to teenagers dealing with risks online, rendering them vulnerable to harm.

The participants in Tarapdar & Kellett's (2011) study expressed that cyberbullying occurred in many ways. Stalking via Facebook and removing people from online group discussions were done to exclude people. Older youth experienced higher levels of being exposed to "happy slaps", abusive emails, abusive texts, silent or prank calls and being bullied using more than one form of technology, especially via hate websites. The current study also deals with issues related to multiple identities as online spaces create avenues for its users to construct their identities according to their preferences which may not necessarily be true. "Happy slapping" was trivialised but also accepted and legitimised as simply banter in a friendship group, which therefore led to under-reporting. While most participants possessed the knowledge to save evidence from online spaces, only a small portion saved the evidence, which hampers the handling of such evidence appropriately. It shows that despite the severe nature of cyberbullying, certain aspects are downplayed, which can be detrimental. Aside from studies about the forms of cyber violence and mediums of perpetration, there is also much research done about particular online conduct and features of cyberspace that endanger young people.

2.5.2 Features of cyberspace and conduct that fosters risk

Particular online conduct, exploiting the features of cyberspace and bypassing mechanisms increase online risks. Some scholars identified that the more time teenagers spend online, the more likely they will be cyberbullied (Berson, Berson, & Ferron, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). It creates perceptions that online spaces are to blame for cyber violence. Payne & Van Belle (2017) executed research in Cape Town, SA, amongst 1258 participants aged 12-17 years by using the survey method. The participants reported having increased access to the internet, with their online activity being unmonitored. The internet is misused because it is a private context, which limits mediation by adults and is risky (Livingstone et al., 2014). Compounding

matters, teenagers tend to employ more complex internet use (Schrock & Boyd, 2008). Kokkinos, Antoniadou, Asdre Voulgaridou (2015) regard extensive use of technology and exposure to negative online content as being related to risky behaviours which may result in cyberbullying.

On a similar note, from their study in America amongst 148 participants aged 12-17 years, Agatston, Kowalski & Limber (2007) gathered that participants knew of ways to circumvent access to cyber applications. Such findings demonstrate the dangerous ways in which teenagers use cyberspace, contributing to possibilities of threats. Livingstone et al. (2011) argue that substantial use of technology contributes to one possessing better ICT skills. Nevertheless, merely engaging in the use of technology should not be regarded as the cause of cyber violence, but rather risky behaviour which creates the potential for harm.

Research conducted by Hopkins, Taylor, Bowen & Wood (2013) across Leicestershire, UK, amongst 57 boys and girls aged 11-17 years, adopted the FGD method. The scholars found that lack of control and accountability over one's behaviour contributed to violent online behaviour. The problem of negative behaviour online was aggravated as teenagers were reluctant to report being victims or perpetrators of negative behaviour or may report situations inaccurately if they belong to a culture that rejects their involvement in such behaviours. They may resort to such actions to avoid being punished by adults.

Lindsay, Booth, Messing and Thaller (2015) claim that technology provides perpetrators with additional access to abuse victims. However, it is crucial to recognise that technological tools should not be liable for the actions of perpetrators, as they are mere devices. Nevertheless, cyberbullies use technology to attack victims anonymously, sometimes in the presence of a large virtual audience for extended periods (Menesini, Nocentini, Palladino, Frisen, Berne, Ortega, & Smith, 2012; Holfeld & Leadbeater, 2015; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012; Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch, 2009). It has the potential to ruin the victim's image and also makes it difficult to trace the perpetrator.

According to Berson, Berson, & Ferron (2002), teenagers are also secretive about their cyber activity, leading to a lack of information about relevant matters and abuse directed at them. There are also claims that sexual offenders employ complex social tactics together with technical complexes, which make it difficult for parents or victims to identify which contacts online pose threats to them (Quale & Taylor, 2011). There are concerns about paedophiles who

take advantage of opportunities like chat rooms to contact and "groom" victims sexually (Van der Merwe, 2013). These findings illustrate that the nuanced features of cyberspace are misused and create dangerous conditions online for young people.

Burton & Mutongwizo (2009) conducted Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention research in Gauteng, Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KZN, SA amongst 1726 participants aged 12-24 years. The researchers argued that forms of cyber violence are unlikely to diminish but may increase in terms of frequency and severity due to technology becoming increasingly sophisticated. Such views blame technology for instigating violence. Furthermore, there are beliefs that "cyberspace cannot be regulated" (Van der Merwe, 2013, p.354). This problematises online activity and has serious implications concerning interventions implemented for dealing with cyber violence.

Features such as the instant nature of cyberspace and intrusive messages contribute to bullying and sexual harassment (Campbell, 2005). Online abuse redeploys and intensifies existing manifestations of rape, due to the speed with which images and written communications are shared online (Shariff & DeMartini, 2015). Using automated technologies allow perpetrators to perpetrate cyber VAWG (Violence against Women and Girls) from a distance (Fraser & Martineau-Searle, 2018). People are also able to view comments and repost humiliating and abusive content, which can rapidly multiply or exist for a long time.

Magnani (2007) refers to the element of computer screens, causing breakage in moral proximity, resulting in a lack of empathy. Some researchers acknowledge the longevity of messages sent online and that there are difficulties associated with escaping from the harassment (Suzuki, Asaga, Sourander, Hoven, & Mandell, 2012; Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2013). Badenhorst (2011) suggests that being in the virtual world leads to children losing their inhibitions, whereby they act and speak in ways in which they may not necessarily do so in person. Anonymity reduces accountability (Herring, 2001) and facilitates disinhibition (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder & Lattanner, 2014). The disinhibition effect makes people invisible, faceless and not concerned with the judgement of others in the way they present themselves (Suler, 2004). This permits hostility and aggression. The nuances of online communication, such as the use of pseudonyms and being free from pressures of society, morality, ethics and conscience, contribute to an offender feeling free online (Notar, Padgett & Roden, 2013). It creates perceptions of detachment from reality, which may intensify harms

perpetrated. These studies reflect that online spaces have advanced features which are misused by perpetrators to violate people, different from how perpetrators violate in physical spaces.

Technology-based communication is devoid of non-verbal communication cues, suggesting that people who communicate using technological gadgets are not able to assess others' facial expressions and body language, leading to a lack of empathy (Moyo, 2017). Wolff, McDevitt & Stark (2011) maintain that sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube erase the constraints of public spaces and provide easy access to people. Perpetrators behave aggressively online because social norms constraining them are weak, and they are not able to see the emotional effects on the victim (Kubiszewski, Fontaine, Potard, & Auzoult, 2015). Circulation of videos and pictures is associated with difficulties in stopping content once it has been posted online (Dempsey et al., 2009; Sticca & Perren, 2013). It depicts the widespread nature of such material. Children also feel invincible owing to difficulties in tracing online activity (Notar, Padgett, & Roden, 2013). Therefore, it is evident that the misuse of online features leads to destructive consequences for victims as their reputations are compromised, and they are at risk of psychological and emotional harm.

Perpetrators use technology to publicly distribute photos (semi-nude or nude) of one's peers (Houck, Barker, Rizzo, Hancock, Norton, & Brown, 2014). Use of technology (especially by an adult) to manipulate an innocent image of a child into pornographic material and post it online can be very traumatising and even dangerous for the child, especially in cases where the image is posted together with contact details (Gillespie, 2006). Such occurrences have serious implications for the safety of youth. Characteristics of cyber technology like cutting and pasting create possibilities for cyberbullying to take place secretly and to spread rapidly (Li, 2007). Even after perpetrators circulate the material to others, Facebook still owns the content (En Kwan & Skoric, 2013). Hence, this subjects victims of cyberbullying on Facebook to abuse. They also feel helpless due to the corporate ownership of the content that may continue to circulate, even long after the incident occurred. Despite blocking facilities to control access to incoming content, teenagers do not utilise the facilities as they prefer being aware of what is being said about them by their peers, despite its cruel nature (Campbell, 2005). Also, a significant percentage of Facebook users fail to pay attention to security and privacy settings (Bennet, 2012), which is a concern. It is therefore evident that there is a myriad of characteristics of online spaces. Cyberspace developers design many features to create sophisticated online spaces, but due to misuse, online violence takes place.

The research reviewed in this section shows that globally there is a large body of research that focusses on cyber violence. However, there is little literature reporting on the voices of young people on how and why they experience violence online.

2.5.3 Cyber violence and socio-cultural factors

Cyber violence is related to the dynamics of gender, age, race, sexualities, and social class. Chukwuere & Chukwuere (2017) mention that violent forms affect people of all races, social class, and gender. This shows its pervasive nature.

To conduct their study, Tarapdar & Kellett (2011) administered FGDs and online and posted surveys to generate data in England amongst 1512 youth aged 12-16 years. Most participants stated that their homes were sources of harm as opposed to school. Older participants believed that the risks of cyberbullying were omnipresent. Some participants indicated that exposure to cyberbullying occurred while travelling or while in the company of friends. These findings coincide with the findings of Monks, Robinson & Worlidge (2012), who maintain that cyberbullying has the potential to occur anywhere. The findings of these studies suggest that cyber violence is ubiquitous, which is concerning.

In terms of race, Burton & Mutongwizo (2009) reported from their study in South Africa that African youth reported high rates of cyber violence, followed by White, Coloured and Indian youth. Comparatively, research conducted by Kupczynski, Mundy & Green (2013) in Texas amongst 361 male and female participants aged 16 years and above using surveys found that White students were more likely to be bullied than persons of colour. However, White students were also more likely to engage in cyberbullying than those of colour (Kupczynski, Mundy, & Green, 2013). It illustrates that White students experience cyberbullying as victims but also perpetuate it. Hence, it is evident that social contexts play a role in shaping experiences.

Pereira, Spitzberg & Matos (2016) conducted an online survey-based study amongst 645 Portuguese boys and girls aged 12-16 years. The research found that perpetrators target and harass teenagers from private schools more than those who attend public schools. However, Akbulut, Sahin & Eristi (2010) claim that those attending government schools were more likely to be cyberbullied or to cyberbully, compared to learners at private schools. These research studies show that social class is a predictor of cyber violence. Few studies about cyber violence examine issues of class and race.

Gorzig & Frumkin (2013) utilised the EU Kids Online survey data generated from a total of 25 142 participants aged 9-16 years from Europe (25 countries). They identified that older children and girls who utilised the internet on their mobile phones were more likely to have experiences of cyberbullying. It suggests that cyberbullying is a gendered and age-related phenomenon. This may also be the case considering that parents may grant older children technological devices compared to younger children and pressures that older children experience to keep up with the latest trends.

In their study investigating the prevalence and nature of cyberbullying amongst 346 participants aged 16-18 years from Limpopo and Free State, SA, Odora & Matoti (2015) utilised the questionnaire method. The scholars articulated that girls were most likely to be victims of cyberbullying, and boys were most likely to perpetuate it. The findings of their study can be related to socially constructed gender norms.

Other studies also recognised that there is an intertwining of issues related to social contexts and cyber violence. Jane (2014, 2017) refers to cyber violence against women and girls as "gendered e-bile." It stems from reinforcement and reproduction of structural inequalities and discrimination as in other forms of violence against women (Fraser & Martineau-Searle, 2018). Revenge, jealousy, anger, political agendas, sexual desires, maintaining social status, monetary gain and ideological agenda influence perpetrators to commit cyber violence against women and girls (Hinson, Mueller, O'Brien-Milne, & Wandera, 2018). Hence, it is evident that women face heightened risks online due to problematic ideas that perpetrators have of them and use it to undermine them.

Thiel-Stern (2008) comments that there are views that girls who post revealing videos and images of themselves online are problematic. Citron (2009) identified similar notions whereby girls who had open profiles received negative judgement and were labelled as sluts, which targets the victim's gender in ways that are degrading and sexually threatening. The findings of these studies show that girls' online conduct is under surveillance and constructs what Welles (2005) and Thiel-Stern (2008) classify as attitudes of girls "asking for it", legitimising abuse which stems from social constructions of gender.

Some scholars maintain that teenage girls experience challenges online differently than boys (Cross, Shaw, Hearn, Epstein, Monks, Lester, & Thomas, 2009; Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr & Rainie, 2011; Livingstone et al., 2011). Most victims who sought help were

girls (Pereira, Spitzberg, & Matos, 2016; Holfeld & Leadbeater, 2015). The findings of these studies can be related to features of femininity and gendered behaviours in society. Research shows that young women have a greater likelihood of being tormented online in a sexually harassing way (Duggan, 2014). Scholars reported that the symptoms of the forms of cyber violence were worse amongst girls than boys (Henson, Reyns, & Fisher, 2013; Nordhal, Beran, & Dittrick, 2013). Girls reported greater negative emotional consequences of being victimised in cyberspace than boys (Schultze-Krumbholz, Jakel, Schultze, & Scheithauer, 2012). Studies reflect that girls also experience fear of cyber harassment more than boys (Fenaughty & Harre, 2013; Maple, Short, & Brown, 2011). These gendered findings of the literature are not surprising and relate to traditional notions of femininity and masculinity. It also suggests that girls have greater concerns about cyber violence as it negatively affects them.

A quantitative study headed by Topcu & Erdur-Baker (2012) in Turkey amongst 795 teenagers aged 13-18 years discovered that boys were more likely to cyberbully than girls (also reported by Li, 2006). Boys' likelihood of cyberbullying more than girls related to views of them being less empathetic than girls (Topcu & Erdur-Baker, 2012). The strict upbringing and supervision of girls in Turkey and toleration of boys' aggressive behaviour also led to boys violating in cyberspace more than girls (Erdur-Baker, 2010). Keith and Martin (2005) claim that more boys than girls build websites that target others and girls and inflict abuse in cyberspace. These studies reflect how gender norms heighten levels of violence and gender inequalities in certain societies. It also highlights that boys' online conduct is underpinned by hegemonic notions of masculinity which render girls vulnerable to harm.

Utilising the survey approach to generate data in Gauteng and Western Cape, SA, amongst 4245 learners aged 13-18 years, Tustin, Zulu & Basson (2014) asserted that girls were victims of cyberbullying more than boys. Specifically, girls aged 15-18 years were victims of cyberbullying. Girls commonly faced cyberbullying in the form of sexual remarks and upsetting messages (ages 15-16 years) and gossip and rumours (ages 17-18 years). It emphasises girls' exposure to harm as a result of the nuanced tactics that perpetrators adopt. Therefore, girls of a similar age group were selected to participate in the current study due to the violence they experience online.

In a Canadian-based quantitative survey involving 11-15-year-old boys and girls, Jackson, Cassidy & Brown (2009) identified varying findings related to gender. The researchers reported that more girls than boys experienced bullying online. This was a common finding in studies

and showed girls' vulnerability to violence online, stemming from gender norms. The researchers found that more boys than girls agreed that they could exercise their rights to say what they want online due to freedom of expression. It may also relate to boys wielding power online. On the other hand, more girls than boys "adopted a different gender and pretended to be older" to access adult websites (p.11). It is evidence of girls' agency in online spaces. Hence, while this is not surprising due to anonymity being a dominant feature of online spaces, it is identifiable that boys and girls interact differently online. It justifies the need for research about young people.

As pointed out in this chapter, many researchers allude to the gendered nature of interactions in cyberspace which places young women at risk of being violated. Research has discovered that male cyberspace users engage in risky behaviour online more than female cyberspace users (Youth Research Unit, 2011; Lau & Yuen, 2013; Erdur-Baker, 2010). However, researchers have also recorded that girls behave dangerously online (McAfee, 2010; Lenhart et al., 2011). It reflects that young women exercise negative power online. There is research which suggests that young women utilise words and bully behind the scenes (Wiseman, 2002). Furthermore, Alexy, Burgess, Baker & Smoyak (2005) stated that young women perpetrated cyberstalking more than young men. Simmons (2002) maintains that young women are more likely to engage in relational aggression due to the ease of bullying without being in physical contact with the victim. These findings challenge socially constructed gender norms and emphasise that girls should not be homogenised as victims of cyber violence as they also perpetuate it. It is essential to consider this, especially in a context where anonymity is an integral feature of teenagers' online interactions.

There have been some studies done about cyber violence and homosexuality. Research conducted by Hinduja & Patchin (2009); Stop Street Harassment study (2018); Lenhart, Ybarra, Zickuhr & Price-Feeney (2016); Baek & Bullock (2014) reported that homosexual youth were at a higher risk of being exposed to violation online. Hence, there is evidence of a devaluing of homosexuality related to dominant gender discourses. This section shows that there is much research about cyber violence and gender. Most of the research posits that teenage girls are victims of cyber violence which is linked to socially constructed gender norms.

2.5.4 Perpetrator identities and attributes

There are multiple identities online as a result of the nuanced features of cyberspace which create particular online relations. Research suggests that cyberbullying is mostly perpetrated by teenagers, especially those who show evidence of having a strong online presence (Meena, Mittal & Solanki, 2012). Participants in Mishna, Saini & Solomon's (2009, p.1224) study assert that it is not just "big bullies" that bully online, but also those considered "too timid to bully others." It clears myths that cyberbullies reflect particular physical characteristics.

Research shows that perpetrators cyberbully those whom they regard as not "fitting in" due to differences in dressing, physical appearance, ethnicity and academic and sporting ability (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009). Perpetrators also violate others due to prejudice, disability, shame, guilt, pride and anger (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009a; Jones, Manstead, & Livingstone, 2011). Hence, it is noticeable that perpetrators violate online as a result of discriminating against particular traits of victims due to a lack of acceptance. Beckley, Caspi, Arseneault, Barnes, Fisher, Harrington & Wertz (2018) recognised that there is also a group called victim-offenders, whereby individuals experience harm as targets and offenders. These findings illustrate that online identities are not static but fluid.

Decreased social presence is associated with the difficulties in tracing perpetrators, contributing to the perpetrator becoming more aggressive and objectifying the victim (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). This relates to Simmerle's (2003) study, which documented that anonymity leads bullies to be more hurtful and scathing towards victims. It is challenging to trace cyberbullies, so it is less likely that they will have to face the consequences of their actions (Strom & Strom, 2005). Along with perpetrators most often being unidentifiable, they have limited fear of reprisal (Hobbs, 2009) and do not feel responsible for their actions (Kowalski et al., 2014; Horowitz & Bollinger, 2014; Schneider et al., 2012). Cyberbullies may perceive their behaviour as morally justifiable, appropriate and profitable, increasing their aggression (Fanti, Demetriou, & Hawa, 2012). Similar to this, Bertolotti & Magnani (2014) posit that acts of cyber violence are sometimes the result of randomness, and sometimes a sense of self-righteousness, whereby a person believes that a remote event justifies violence against another person. Such attitudes permit and condone negative actions which heighten violence online.

In Hinduja & Patchin's (2009) study, students cyberbullied due to retaliation as they believed that the target deserved the bullying due to something done to them. Perpetrators sometimes manipulate another person (a third party) to bully on their behalf, and this is termed cyberbullying by proxy (Sleglova & Cerna, 2011). Some perpetrators do not realise how particular behaviours online are regarded as detrimental, which removes the accountability of perpetrators for their actions (Weibel & Fern, 2012). Nevertheless, cyberbullies have to face harsh discipline in certain instances (Kokkinos et al., 2015). This suggests that in certain contexts, cyberbullying is not trivialised. The findings of these studies reflect that perpetrators have various perceptions and beliefs about cyber violence, which influences them to engage in negative actions online.

Shared passwords contribute to perpetrators pretending to be someone else, which is problematic because secrets that online users shared in confidence were revealed unknowingly to the wrong person (Kernaghan & Elwood, 2013). Masquerading, as a form of cyber violence, involves perpetrators pretending to be someone else, concealing their identities and posting disparaging images, resulting in them feeling powerful (Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009). In some cases, perpetrators made false claims about online users hacking their accounts (also identified by Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009). By making such claims, perpetrators avoid taking responsibility for their actions. Perpetrators repeatedly embarrass, threaten, harass or exclude someone who has less power online (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Roumeliotis, Farrow, & Shia, 2014). These findings show evidence of multiple power relations in operation.

Mark & Ratliffe (2011) headed a Hawaiian-based research study and utilised in-class questionnaires to generate data from 265 multiracial girls and boys from grades 6-8. The research depicted that most victims in the study had no knowledge of who cyberbullied them, which is a concern. This is similar to studies by DePaolis & Williford (2015) and Burton & Mutongwizo (2009), where the participants reported that they did not know the identity of the perpetrator who violated them. Being unaware of the identities of perpetrators, victims feel reluctant to inform adults about their experiences, as they want to maintain their independence (Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009). These studies reveal findings that cyberspace is nuanced due to the feature of anonymity, which creates challenges concerning the identification of perpetrators.

On a different level, Oosterwyk (2013) reported that those who were aware of the perpetrator mostly mentioned that it was a male offender who perpetrated cyberbullying against them. Juvonen & Gross (2008) administered research amongst 452 participants between the ages of 12-17 years in America. They discovered that victims of cyberbullying knew who the perpetrator was (similar to Payne, 2015), but password violations led to cyberbullying. Hence, anonymity is a sophisticated feature of cyberspace, but it is not the only characteristic that leads to a violation.

A study conducted by Whittaker & Kowalski (2015, Study 1) in the USA adopting surveys amongst 169 female and 75 male youth conveyed that perpetrators were mostly friends, followed by other students at school, strangers, siblings or others. Likewise, Cassidy, Jackson & Brown (2009) and Jones, Mitchell & Finkelhor (2013) described cyber violence as being perpetrated by friends. It shows that even those who generally shared good relations with perpetrators get violated. These findings challenge the stereotype that only strangers commit cyber violence. Perpetrators of sextortion may be a former or current girlfriend or boyfriend (Korchmaros, Ybarra, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Boyd, & Lenhart, 2013; Van Ouytsel, Ponnet, & Walrave, 2018; Zweig, Lachman, Yahner, & Dank, 2014). If the perpetrator is a family member, it could be in the form of sexual abuse of a child (Kopecky, 2017; Taylor & Quayle, 2003). If the perpetrator is a stranger, it can be grooming and predation (O'Connell, 2003; Krone, 2004). The literature in this section shows that there is much research about perpetrator identities, which vary from known to unknown. Hence, one should not homogenise the identity of people who perpetrate cyber violence. The advanced features of cyberspace allow for multiple identities to operate online and create specific online relations. Research has shown that peers also influence the formation of particular identities online.

2.5.5 Peer influence and impact

Amongst the youth, peers have a significant influence on each other, not only in physical spaces but also online. It also has implications for how young people conduct themselves online. Brandes & Levin (2014) administered FGDs amongst Israeli girls between the ages of 12 and 18 years. They identified that amongst younger girls, being a good friend meant knowing who to be friends with, showing support to friends, avoiding conflict and danger and not seeking attention or posting trivial statuses and selfies. There was a consensus amongst peers that girls who posted self-indulgent or sexy photos of themselves asked to get criticised. It highlights that girls internalise traditional notions of femininity and sanction processes like slut-shaming.

The findings of their study also suggest an interweaving of girls' friendships and online interactions with gendered notions.

From their longitudinal study conducted amongst 261 racially diverse participants from grades 6-8 in America, Wright & Li (2013) suggested that cyber aggression was related to both cyber victimisation and peer rejection. Loneliness caused cyberbullying (Sahin, 2012), and being perceived as supported by peers was associated with low rates of cyberbullying (Ubertini, 2011). These findings suggest that peers form a significant part of teenagers' lives and online interactions which is not a surprising finding considering that teenagers seek acceptance and approval from their peers. It, therefore, emphasises that for teenagers, social reputations are important in their peer relationships (Badaly, Schwartz, & Gorman, 2012).

There is also research related to negative peer influences. Park, Jung & Lee (2011) found in their study that peer norms influence the intentions of online users to behave in a risky way online. They recognised that teenagers who expected their friends to engage in risky sexual behaviour online were more likely to engage in such activities (Baumgartner, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010, 2011). Furthermore, from their study amongst 495 Israeli students using online surveys, Sasson & Mesch (2014) identified that teenagers who behave in risky ways online hold the belief that their friends approve of it. Perceptions of peer approval of risky online behaviour reduced the effects of parents' restrictive supervision (Sasson & Mesch, 2014). These findings indicate that, in some cases, validation from peers is of greater importance to teenagers than online safety which may foster negative online behaviours.

2.5.6 Sexual violation in cyberspace

From the literature synthesised, sexual forms of violence online was a prominent feature. Sexual violation manifests itself in different forms, including sexting, sextortion, CDA, and cyber slut-shaming. Identities on SNSs are often sexualised and gendered (Tortajada, Arauna, & Martınez, 2013; Garcia-Gomez, 2013). Research shows that mainly young women are vulnerable to forms of cyber violence of a sexual nature (Pew Internet Survey, 2014). Hence, it is crucial to study sexual forms of violence amongst young women.

One of the forms of cyber sexual violence is "sexting". Sexting is defined as "the digital production of sexually suggestive or explicit images and distribution by mobile phone messaging or through the internet on social network sites… extending it to the sending of sexually suggestive texts" (Lee & Crofts, 2015, p.454). Angelides (2013) suggests that sexting

is as an expression of sexual agency. Hence, it is evident that sexting is a visual and verbal form of cyber violence arising from the advanced features of cyberspace.

One of the studies that focus on sexting is a study by Kamaku & Mberia (2014) in Kenya amongst 320 secondary school students (boys and girls) using surveys. They stated that participants had exposure to sexts, and some participants did not have guidance about the dangers associated with it. As a result of this, some participants blamed their teachers and parents for not creating awareness about sexual material available on SNSs, which led to them not reporting sexual harassment to their parents. It is evident that there are issues associated with reduced parent and teacher involvement which places victims in precarious situations. I return to adult involvement in more detail later in the chapter.

Van Oosten & Vandenbosch (2017) executed research amongst 953 Dutch teenagers aged 13-17 years and 899 youth aged 18-25 years. The study found that sexy self-presentations online increased willingness to sext but only amongst teenage girls. It shows how online users' intentions are influenced by visual representations online. Therefore, the focus on teenage girls is significant.

Research by Walrave, Ponnet, Van Ouytsel, Van Gool, Heirman & Verbeek (2015) utilised surveys to generate data from 217 participants aged 15-19 years in Europe. It demonstrated that social norms are a significant predictor in intentions to sext, whereby teenagers' attitudes to sexting and the impression they have of their peers engaging in sexting influence their intentions to sext. Therefore, teenagers who sought approval from their peers shared favourable attitudes towards sexting. Romantic involvement amongst teenagers contributed significantly to engagement in sexting. Girls were less willing to sext than boys, yet they did engage in the behaviour as the trust placed in one's partner had the potential to overshadow perceived risks. This study highlights that girls value acceptance and approval not only from their friends but also dating partners for which they are willing to take risks.

Dick, McCauley, Jones, Tancredi, Goldstein, Blackburn, Monasterio, James, Silverman, & Miller (2014) identified that girls had to bear the increased burden of refusing or agreeing to boys' sexting requests. Male cyberspace users were more likely to send sexually explicit photos or messages (Rice, Gibbs, Winetrobe, Rhoades, Plant, Montoya, & Kordic, 2014) and to have viewed them online compared to girls (Livingstone, Kalmus, & Talves, 2013). Green, Brady, Olafsson, Hartley & Lumby (2011) reported that female respondents felt upset about receiving

and viewing sexts. These studies show the gendered nature of sexting which is underpinned by hegemonic notions of masculinity.

Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith (2013) executed a study amongst 33 male and female participants aged 15-20 years in Australia. There were different circumstances that sexting occurred in: sexting occurred as a result of boredom, an element of fun, experimenting sexually, and a sexual characteristic in long-distance relationships. Young women were threatened, coerced or bribed by young men to send revealing images. Perpetrators used sexts to blackmail a person after a relationship had ended. Those who experienced blackmailing online faced many challenges related to keeping their personal lives private. From the responses given by participants in Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith's (2013) study, it was clear that young men regarded sexting as participating in behaviour that was positive and attained masculine status, while young women viewed it as destroying their sexual reputations. Perpetrators painted girls as sluts, skanks, whores and idiots. These findings point to traditional gender stereotypes related to girls; in that way, creating gender inequalities as similar terminology is not adopted to refer to boys or men. However, Lenhart (2009) maintains that sexting also occurs because there are pressures to engage in it as girls believe that they may lose an opportunity with a boy if they do not accede to requests for sexts. This shows that young women also hold onto romantic notions of love.

In some cases, young men allowed their male friends to view sexts sent by their girlfriend and "show off" (Salter, Crofts & Murray, 2013, p.302). This has the potential to ruin the reputations of young women. In some instances, young men experienced pressure from their male colleagues to show each other images received, and if they failed to fulfil this requirement, they were referred to as gay or received silent treatment (Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith, 2013). It emphasises heteronormativity and the silencing of alternate masculinities. The findings from this study highlight what Simpson (2013) classifies as sexting occurring in two contexts – coercion or in trusting relationships; nevertheless, it can lead to risky behaviour.

Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith (2013) pointed out that young women who sent sexually revealing images received blame for any issues that occurred after that, even if young men coerced them to send the images. It points out the vulnerability of young women and them being violated and placed in possibly embarrassing situations. Young women lacked sympathy towards young women who sexted and ended up losing their reputations, as they blamed the

victim for judging the situation inappropriately. Therefore, it illustrates the policing of female sexual conduct and double standards that prevail in society and foster gender inequalities.

Responses from participants in Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith's (2013) study indicated that some young men spread sexts by leaking them, while other young men experienced discomfort and challenged this practice. They acknowledged that expecting young women to produce and send sexts was embarrassing, offensive and wrong. Furthermore, some young men felt remorseful for posting and sharing sexually explicit images of young women to others without receiving consent from them. These findings indicate the disapproval of some men towards sexting which challenges gender stereotypes. However, this does not suggest that young women do not send such pictures of men to other women. This study shows that sexting is influenced by gender, teenage sexualities and pressures to engage in it.

Ringrose, Harvey, Gill & Livingstone (2013) used a multi-method approach such as FGDs, Facebook mapping of online activities and individual interviews to research 35 teenagers aged 12-15 years in the UK. The researchers claimed that while sexting results in teenagers exploring their sexual identities and expressing their sexual interests, it is risky. Possible misuse of intimate images can contribute to cyber harassment (Ringrose et al., 2013). Evidence of sexual double standards was identifiable in cases where boys willingly circulated sexual images of girls but also criticised girls for posting such pictures (Ringrose et al., 2013). There was further evidence of double standards which rewarded boys for sexting behaviours and denigrated girls for it (Ringrose et al., 2013; Vandoninck & d'Haenens, 2014; Walker, Sanci, & Temple-Smith, 2013). These findings relate to gender stereotypes about masculinities and femininities and the complexities that girls face due to sexting.

While the research above reflects that girls experience sexting as victims, there are also studies which show otherwise. One such study by Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone & Harvey (2012) showed that girls are at risk because of being sexualised, their self-production of sexy images commoditised and classifications of them as "entrepreneurs" who exchange sexts for money and goods. Such practices are risky as it creates possibilities for girls to be objectified. Similarly, The Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety Inquiry (2011) recognised that girls bargained sexts in exchange for drugs and cigarettes. It points out how young women commercialise sexting and are not without agency. This must be considered in light of substance and alcohol abuse having the potential to lower inhibitions and decision making of individuals which can contribute to risky behaviours associated with sexting (Temple, Le, van

den Berg, Ling, Paul, & Temple, 2014). It is noticeable that sexting is associated with negative consequences in both offline and online contexts, showing the intertwining of these spaces. Sextortion is another form of cyber violence which prevails and is both similar and different to sexting.

Wolak, Finkelhor, Walsh & Treitman (2018, p.72) define sextortion as "threats to expose sexual images to coerce victims to provide additional pictures, sex, or other favours." Wolak et al. (2018) suggested several reasons for victims providing images to perpetrators, such as being in a relationship or feeling pressured to do so. Victims also stated that they were tricked into it, threatened, expected payment in return for images, or were under the impression that the images were for acting or modelling. It is recognisable that sextortion is similar to sexting in the sense that both demand victims to send images or other material of a sexual nature. Sexting differs from sextortion in the sense that sextortion is associated with higher levels of coercion than sexting.

In their research amongst 5568 participants aged 12-17 years in the USA, Patchin & Hinduja (2018) mentioned that some participants reported experiencing sextortion and few participants admitted that they threatened those who shared images with them. Those youth who threatened others had an increased chance of being a victim of it which shows evidence of role reversal. Threats were made and carried out using methods such as revenge porn which can ruin a victim's reputation. Sextortion occurred most frequently in previous or existing relationships, be it romantic relationships or friendships. Sextortion can occur in physical spaces and cyberspace, contributing to heightened levels of risk.

CDA is a form of cyber violence and IPV (Baker & Carreno, 2016; Marganski & Melander, 2018) and includes looking at messages without one's partner's permission, sending threatening messages, sharing private videos/photos without seeking permission, and posting negative information about one's partner online (Woodlock, 2016). In Texas, USA, Temple, Choi, Brem, Wolford-Clevenger, Stuart, Peskin & Elmquist (2016) utilised data from a 6-year ongoing longitudinal research study. The study surveyed 780 teenage boys and girls. It acknowledged the relationship between CDA and physical dating abuse. Their findings also showed that teenagers who had experiences of CDA were also likely to perpetrate it (Temple et al., 2016). It coincides with Fagan & Mazerolle's (2011) findings that in many cases, the victims and perpetrators of CDA are the same people. Such findings point out role reversal and the perilous dynamics in dating relationships linked to insecurities.

Baker & Carreno (2016) engaged 39 teenagers in FGDs in Hawaii. The researchers stated that teenagers made use of technology to initiate and end relationships. Participants viewed technology as instigating jealousy, being used to monitor dating partners and isolating them from others, which facilitated violence within relationships. Here too, there is evidence of technology being held accountable for violations. Stonard et al., (2015); Lyndon, Bonds-Raacke & Cratty (2011); Marwick (2012); Tokunaga (2011) identified similar findings regarding the use of SNSs to monitor current and previous partners. It is evident that many studies recognised surveillance in relationships which intrudes on the privacy of people.

Draucker & Martsolf (2010) carried out interviews and narrative-based research in Ohio amongst 56 male and female participants aged 18-21 years. This study depicted that there are unhealthy occurrences within relationships. Dating partners send threatening text and voice messages to a partner, utilise threats to harm one's partner if he/she did not respond to messages, and post threatening and insulting comments about a partner in online spaces. Hence, it is glaring that perpetrators adopt a myriad of tactics to harm their partners persistently.

Dick et al. (2014) administered a cross-sectional survey in California amongst 1008 multiracial teenage boys and girls. The study showed that more girls compared to boys reported that their partners contacted them to enquire about their whereabouts. It reflects the invasion of their privacy. CDA was associated with non-use of contraceptives and therefore related to risks of pregnancy. This study demonstrates that CDA links to male power and contributes to sexual risk-taking behaviours, rendering girls vulnerable to harm.

Comparatively, a study by Girlguiding (2013) depicted CDA as gendered differently, as girls became more obsessive owing to being concerned with their partner's responses to their communication. Girls instigated the checking of boyfriend's phones and monitored them due to being protective. It is similar to findings by Lucero et al., (2014), who took note of male participants' comments that their girlfriends regularly monitored them. It depicts girls challenging traditional gender stereotypes and exercising power over their boyfriends. While some respondents regarded high levels of contact from their dating partners as uncomfortable and annoying, some girls held views that this was a sign of care, love, closeness and seriousness in the relationship (Girlguiding, 2013). However, King-Ries (2011) maintains that teenagers using cyberspace to control and monitor their dating partners is unhealthy.

In their Belgium-based study, Van Ouystel, Ponnet, Walrave & Temple (2016) drew data from the *Teenage Digital Dating* Survey, which involved 1187 young men and women aged 16-22 years. It was apparent to the researchers that victims of CDA had more sexual partners and were less likely to use protection. CDA victims frequently engaged in heavy drinking of alcohol (also found by Parker & Bradshaw, 2015). However, male victims of CDA consumed alcohol more frequently than female victims (also found by Zweig et al., 2014). These findings indicate the relationship between CDA, gender, delinquency and sexual activity. In light of this, researchers should not study such aspects in isolation. Cyber slut-shaming is another form of sexual violence that prevails online.

Research suggests that the internet propagates destructive stereotypes of women and problematic ideas about masculinity (Broadband Commission Gender Working Group, 2015), which can be detrimental. SNSs facilitate violent forms like slut-shaming young women for engaging in sexting (Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Ringrose et al., 2013) and morally sanctioning them for being presented in a sexualised manner (Kapidzic & Herring, 2015; Garcia-Gomez, 2013). Slut-shaming uses the expected norms of femininity to classify girls as socially undesirable (Clayton & Trafimow, 2007). Van Royen, Vandebosch & Poels (2015) administered a study in Belgium by conducting FGDs amongst 83 boys and girls aged 12-18 years. They deduced that actions such as displaying one's body facilitate online gender harassment, which often occurs through the circulation of gossip about a person's sexual conduct. It demonstrates that the conduct of young women is under surveillance online due to gendered norms and expectations.

Tanenbaum (2015) and Ringrose & Renold (2010) are amongst researchers who claim that boys slut-shame girls who demonstrate agency or violate gender norms. The online violation also attempts to regulate offline behaviours by slut-shaming women to prevent them from being unfaithful and sharing sexual experiences with others due to feeling threatened (Van Royen, 2017). It is not only boys that slut-shame, but also girls, which sometimes stems from them quarrelling (Van Royen, 2017) and attempting to boost their self-esteem (Clayton & Trafimow, 2007). Hence, cyber slut-shaming renders girls vulnerable to harm by girls and boys. Therefore, girls should not be homogenised as victims of male violence only.

There was a similar study in Europe, Canada, Australia, Pakistan, South Korea and the USA amongst 308 participants aged 18-25 years. In this study, Papp, Hagerman, Gnoleba, Erchull, Liss, Miles-McLean & Robertson (2015) acknowledged that young women might be classified

as less physically aggressive to attract desirable male partners. However, they choose to degrade their female competitors by utilising relational aggression. Furthermore, Renold and Ringrose (2011, p.391-392) mention that teenage girls are "knowledgeable, savvy navigators of a contemporary toxic sexual culture." These findings position girls as sexualised and agentic.

Mascheroni, Vincent & Jimenez (2015) drew from qualitative data emerging from projects conducted in Spain, Italy and the UK (*EU Kids Online* and *Net Children Go Mobile*) amongst 107 participants aged 11-16 years who participated in FGDs and interviews. Cyber slut-shaming was associated with girls experiencing peer pressure and posing in sexy ways to look "perfect" and gain popularity, as conforming to conventions of peers and particular beauty standards receive legitimation, validation, and "likes" from peers. Nevertheless, girls are blamed and negatively sanctioned by boys for posing in sexy ways for photos. It highlights that boys expect girls to present themselves according to conservative gender norms. Girls who posted sexy pictures of themselves received blame for the negative consequences related to their actions, like being harassed by strangers. It emphasises the backlash that girls face in response to their online conduct. Similarly, Tanenbaum (2015) and Weiss (2010) found that men blamed young women for being sexually victimised. These studies illustrate that harmful forms like slut-shaming are sanctioned, legitimising hegemonic notions of masculinity.

Oduaran & Okorie (2016) reported that young women are harassed sexually as a result of naked videos of them posted and watched online. The researchers comment that:

> Culturally, the nakedness of a woman is her glory and beauty. When women are harassed by sexually explicit videos of their nude state, these women lose their pride, esteem and identity. Invariably, the practice of cyber harassment on social media platforms negatively affects the esteem and self-identity of women (p.7605).

The above quotation suggests that sexually harassing women is demeaning for them and can tarnish their image. Researchers state that being slut-shamed also contributes to victims becoming suicidal, more sexually active, tending to deprive their body (Poole, 2014; Tanenbaum, 2015) and receiving less acceptance in society (Kreager & Staff, 2009). Hence, cyber slut-shaming is a gendered phenomenon that has adverse effects on young women. Owing to teenage girls being primarily affected by sexual forms of violence online, research must focus on them.

Revenge pornography is also a severe issue that prevails and is related to gender violence (Blumenstein & Jasinski, 2015). With the use of case studies in Malawi and Uganda to elucidate the incidence of revenge porn in non-western backgrounds, Chisala-Tempelhoff & Kirya (2016) comment that gender power structures have repercussions for people regardless of platform. It makes it evident that violent forms like slut-shaming are ubiquitous. While some researchers (Chisala-Tempelhoff & Kirya, 2016; Shah, 2015; Salter, 2013) refer to the phenomenon as revenge pornography, Franks (2014) explains that sexual images disclosed without the consent of those concerned is non-consensual pornography. The term revenge porn is therefore misleading as sometimes perpetrators may not divulge sexual images due to revenge, but rather owing to entertainment, profit and notoriety. It is an almost impossible task to remove images that are uploaded online, and perpetrators can save, copy and circulate those images effortlessly (Matsui, 2015). It shows the sophisticated nature of online features which perpetrators misuse.

Victims of slut-shaming are stigmatised once sexual images of them are published (Burris, 2014). Researchers state that deviating from norms related to the worth of female chastity results in the chastisement and scorning of young women (Chisala-Tempelhoff & Kirya, 2016), in contrast to men, due to double standards existing (Gentry, 1998). Furthermore, people malign female victims instead of sympathising with them or striving to achieve justice (Chisala-Tempelhoff & Kirya, 2016). Tamale (2007) regards this as a patriarchal instrument to create and maintain a particular gender order. Therefore, non-consensual pornography is harmful to women as it undermines gender equality (Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, 2015). There is extensive research about the sexual violation of young women. The studies suggest that this form of violence in cyberspace is rife and stems from gender norms, which have an impact on young women's sexuality and their reputations.

2.5.7 Interconnections between online and offline violence

There is a significant relationship between cyberspace and physical spaces. Online and offline social spaces continue to be blended owing to the rapid development of technology (Gergen, 2002; Turkle, 2008), creating a relationship between teenagers' online and offline behaviours and attitudes (Subrahmanyum, Garcia, & Harsono, 2009). Victims of physical bullying are also known to be victims of cyberbullying (Livingstone & Smith, 2014; Payne, 2015), and those who bully in physical spaces also bully in cyberspace. This assertion tells us that cyberbullying and physical bullying are not isolated from each other.

Scholars state that youth who perpetrate aggressive behaviour in cyberspace regard violence against their peers as the norm (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Williams & Guerra, 2007). Such behaviour legitimises violence. Cyberbullying has the potential to extend to physical bullying (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012; Hemphill, Tollit, & Kotevski, 2012). Hughes & Louw (2013) pointed out that cyberbullying contributes to heightened antisocial behaviours, which aggravates bullying in schools. Teenagers who threatened others online were likely to carry out the threats (Lindberg, Oksanen, Sailas, & Kaltiala-Heino, 2012), which is problematical. Circulating online videos related to fights influences teenagers to fight with other teenagers physically (Larkin & Dwyer, 2016). School-related bullying also extends to cyberspace (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Notar, Padgett, & Roden, 2013). Hence, it is evident that violence is ubiquitous due to an intertwining of offline and online aspects.

Some researchers claim that victims are also perpetrators of harassment online and physically (Jennings, Piquero, & Reingle, 2012; Law, Shapka, Domene, & Gagne, 2012; Posick, 2013). These studies demonstrate a reversal of roles and multiple power relations in action. Phenomena like CDA and physical dating abuse may be experienced concurrently in teenage relationships (Korchmaros et al., 2013). It suggests that perpetrators do not necessarily feel inhibited, causing the prevalence of violence, irrespective of space.

Researchers investigated the relationship between cyberspace and physical spaces. One such study is a study that Landstedt & Persson (2014) administered amongst 1214 Swedish boys and girls aged 13-16 years by adopting a web-based questionnaire. The researchers established that school environmental factors were associated with being exposed to physical and cyberbullying. A poor image of one's physical body and discrimination in the school environment also led to experiences of physical and cyberbullying amongst boys and girls. Amongst girls, exposure to cyberbullying and physical bullying was associated with a poor image of the body and low levels of teacher support. Hence, it is noticeable that the physical environment has the potential to influence online interactions.

Wilton & Campbell (2011) did a similar study by using the questionnaire-based study method amongst 400 boys and girls aged 12-17 years in Australia. Their research explored reasons for physical and cyberbullying. It showed that these forms of bullying occurred because perpetrators wanted to receive attention from others, feel better about themselves, and instigate others who are different from them. It is identifiable that cyberbullying and physical bullying are related due to teenagers wanting to be raised on the social hierarchy.

Li, Smith & Cross (2012) recognised further evidence of the relationship between cyber violence and physical violence by asserting that bounded space does not apply to cyberbullying as it occurs beyond physical space. Youth are more open about perpetrating cyber violence than physical violence (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). It normalises violent attitudes and behaviours. Studies show that cyberbullying has the potential to cause greater harm than physical bullying (Bauman & Pero, 2010; O'Higgins Norman & Connolly, 2011; Srivastava, 2012). This is because there is no escape for victims due to the extent of harmful material that perpetrators save and spread (Freis & Gurung, 2013; Li, 2010). It is evident that perpetrators use technological advancements to harm victims.

Scholars add that the impact of being cyber abused can last for more extended periods compared to being abused offline (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Bocji & McFarlane, 2003), which is concerning. These studies depict the interrelated nature of cyber violence and physical violence which scholars have researched. During instances of physical violence, there are possibilities for the exposure of bystanders to such incidents which is also the case with cyber violence.

2.5.8 Bystanders to cyber violence

In light of cyber violence sometimes occurring in the presence of a virtual audience, it is vital to take into account the reactions of bystanders. Machackova, Dedkova, Sevcikona & Cerna (2013) generated data from 156 Czech boys and girls aged 12-18 years to research bystander behaviour. The scholars distinguished between confrontational bystander behaviour and supportive bystander behaviour. Confrontational bystander behaviour involves confrontation with the bully to defend the victim. Comparatively, supportive bystander behaviour involves encouraging the victim to ignore it or recommending a source of help. The study showed that some bystanders told the victim to ignore the bully, apologised to the victim and said it was not worth worrying about the situation. Some bystanders engaged the victim so that he/she avoided thinking about the situation, recommended someone who could help, or provided technical advice about how to stop the cyberbullying. It is noticeable here, that bystanders displayed supportive bystander behaviour, possibly linked to their beliefs about some issues.

While the participants in the study above showed supportive bystander behaviour, in research by Shultz, Heilman & Hart (2014) in the USA amongst 149 racially diverse male and female respondents aged 18-27 years, there were mixed reactions from bystanders. This study required

participants to comment on a fictitious Facebook conversation containing negative comments. Most respondents recognised that cyberbullying was mean and wrong, but some participants were uncertain about how to react to it. While an overwhelming majority witnessed cyberbullying in their interactions online, they declined to comment online but intervened offline by speaking to the victim. The reasons for their choices included not wanting to get involved, not being comfortable commenting, regarding it as not being their place to comment, and being afraid of an attack from the bullies. Some participants felt helpless and that their comments would be ineffective or could cause more trouble, despite disagreeing with the mistreatment of the victim. Furthermore, participants cascaded responses whereby their beliefs about certain subjects motivated them not to comment or not wanting to be associated with such topics, for example, drinking alcohol, and partying (Shultz, Heilman & Hart, 2014). Some participants believed that victims had some form of control over situations online and should respond responsibly by deleting material; in this way, they cast blame onto the victims. Participants who disapproved of the perpetrator's treatment of the victim, empathised with him/her, wanted to intervene, did not want to take sides, but wanted to end the bullying in a non-confrontational way indirectly. These findings suggest that bystanders are sometimes reluctant to show support for victims of cyber violence, possibly due to them colluding with views that blame victims or not wanting to make matters worse.

Many studies demonstrate that bystander behaviour is rarely neutral (Price & Dalgleish, 2010; Li, 2006, 2007, 2010; Smith et al., 2008). It is also evident in a study by Whittaker & Kowalski (2015, Study 1) as participants who were bystanders responded to cyberbullying in various ways. Some of which includes reporting the bullying, requesting the perpetrator to stop, cyberbullying back, making fun of the perpetrator to others, saving evidence of the cyberbullying and then blocking the perpetrator. Similarly, a Flemish study showed that bystanders helped targets when they perceived cyberbullying to be severe (Bastiaensens, Vandebosch, Poels, Van Cleemput, DeSmet, & De Bourdeaudhuij, 2014). Therefore, bystanders should not merely be regarded as witnesses to violence but also individuals who exercise power by confronting perpetrators and taking action against such incidents.

In some cases, bystanders unintentionally become accomplices to cyberbullying as they regard incidents as humorous, read the material, and forward cyberbullying-related pictures and messages (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Similarly, Barlinska, Szuster & Winiewski (2013) carried out three experimental studies amongst Polish boys and girls aged 11-18 years. Their research

illustrated that bystanders who are present might spread the material to others. This is negative bystander behaviour which may exacerbate cyberbullying.

Another study which took into account negative bystander behaviour is a British-based district survey that Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse (2012) conducted amongst 19 551 boys and girls aged 11-18 years. The researchers discovered that there is sometimes a reversal of roles; that is, individuals can sometimes be the victim and sometimes assume the role of the perpetrator, because of responding to negative postings, leading to both individuals engaging in bullying. Witnesses from both sides also become involved, since the number of witnesses in virtual spaces are exponentially more and people are more comfortable saying things online compared to offline. It facilitates high levels of violence and can be destructive. It is noticeable from this section that multiple power relations operate online, which relates to the subjectivities of individuals.

2.5.9 Adult involvement in dealing with cyber violence

There are views which suggest that ICTs are spaces for young people, where adults may not understand or follow them (Todd, 2014; Shade, 2007). It signifies an exclusion of adults and has significant implications for both teenagers and adults.

With the use of telephonic interviews, Seiler & Navarro (2014) generated data from American parents and their children aged 12-17 years. The researchers found that being sociable and having their parents involved in their lives decreased chances of being bullied online and offline. It shows the positive impact of parenting on the lives of young people. This is related to research by Berson, Berson & Ferron (2002) who administered web-based questionnaires to 10 800 participants (girls) aged 12-18 years in Baltimore, USA. Most respondents stated that their parents and teachers spoke to them about online safety, signifying some degree of intervention. Furthermore, the scholars found that parents who adopted a more involved approach to their parenting and enforced strict rules contributed to reduced tendencies amongst teenagers to engage in harmful cyber activities. Therefore, parental intervention is crucial.

Conversely, Vandoninck, d'Haenens & Roe (2013) distinguished that low self-esteem, sharing a dysfunctional relationship with parents or guardians, and having a tendency to be aggressive posed risks online. Furthermore, Lau & Yuen's (2013) study in Hong Kong amongst 825 secondary school students described parenting styles as not effective in reducing risky behaviours in online spaces. To make matters worse, Dilmac & Aydogan (2010) alert that some

families teach their children aggressive coping strategies which create cyberbullies. The findings of these studies make it clear that poor parenting is a predictor for risky online behaviour.

Gasior (2009) also focussed on parenting and cyber violence in a study involving the participation of 62 parents (mostly females) of teenagers from two schools in California, USA. The emailed survey method yielded data which suggested that a large proportion of parents lacked information about cyberbullying and cyber safety and had not accessed cyber safety sites or information related to cyber activity, but had information from the media. Nevertheless, more than half of the parent group studied had devised rules to exercise some control over their child's cyber activity (Gasior, 2009). However, Dehue, Bolman & Vollink (2008) gathered from their findings that parents formulate rules for their children about internet usage but are not aware of the violence. Similarly, Kritzinger (2017) administered online surveys to generate data from 503 participants aged 16-19 years from across SA. It was evident that there was insufficient awareness about cyber safety amongst parents. Furthermore, there was also a lack of parental control and monitoring of their child's cyber-related activities, which was also noticed by Keith & Martin (2005), Talwar, Gomez-Garibello & Shariff (2014), and Odora & Matoti (2015). In a study by Payne (2015), a significant amount of the study population stated that parental monitoring was not frequent. These studies suggest that there is insufficient guidance and support for young people who are exposed to several risks online which can compromise their safety.

Wong-Lo & Bullock (2011) conducted a study of 137 participants (62 teenagers and 75 parents). This study reflected that while a large number of the parents claimed to be knowledgeable about issues related to cyberbullying, an overwhelming majority reported that they did not know whether their child had been a victim of it. It is related to teenagers being secretive about their online interactions. Mason (2008) asserts that parents are also ignorant about technology. Tsaliki & Chronaki (2010) assert that parents experience difficulty in dealing with online threats due to their lack of knowledge about the internet, which can complicate matters. These findings position parents in a negative light and as failing to deal with issues related to cyber violence.

Cyber safety issues are also not addressed adequately by schools and teachers in SA (Kritzinger, 2017), which may increase risk-taking behaviours online. Many participants in Mark & Ratliffe's (2011) study conducted in Hawaii amongst 265 multiracial students in

grades 6-8 were uncertain about their teachers' knowledge to intervene and ensure safety from cyberbullying. Hence, a lack of intervention from adults has adverse consequences.

There are conflicting findings about teenagers reporting incidences of cyber violence. DePaolis & Williford (2015) gathered that more than 50% of their respondents did not report the incident to anyone, as they feared that their parents would revoke their online privileges. Studies by Gasior (2009); Keith & Martin (2005), and Tarapdar & Kellett (2011) also recognised that teenagers were afraid to report cyber violence to adults as they did not want adults to take away their technological gadgets. There are also beliefs amongst teenagers that the school staff would be unable to deal with the situation effectively (DePaolis & Williford, 2015). Likewise, in Cassidy, Jackson & Brown's (2009) study, participants shared cynical views about the ability of the school to deal with cyberbullying. Hence, children report the matter to their peers, parents/guardians, then the school (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009). In some cases, victims did not report being victims of cyberbullying as they felt that their friends could also get into trouble and parental restrictions on their access to the internet would be sanctioned (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009). Ging & O'Higgins Norman (2016) commented that teachers are unaware of how students utilise social media, and viewed students using their mobile phones during school hours as not their responsibility. Such findings point out that young people gamble with their safety to avoid losing their access to online spaces.

Participants in the study done by Agatston, Kowalski & Limber (2007) believed that it was unlikely that teenagers would report instances of cyberbullying to adults at school, as schools prohibit the use of mobile phones during school hours. They held beliefs about adults at school being unable to assist them with such problems. Compounding matters, teenagers did not report cyberbullying due to the absence of an official policy against it (Li, 2006). Teenagers remaining silent about cyberbullying places them in precarious situations.

Li (2007) recorded that a large number of victims who were cyberbullied or were aware of someone who experienced cyberbullying decided not to inform adults about it. Suzuki et al., (2012) and Slonje, Smith, and Frisen (2013) are also amongst scholars who mention that victims of cyber harassment do not always seek assistance from others. When they choose to seek assistance, they prefer to request it from friends compared to adults. The International Youth Advisory Congress (2008) found that teenagers confessed to sharing information of a sexual nature with their friends, as they believed that adults had no clue about those situations. Some researchers found that parents underestimate the issue of cyber violence (Strom, Strom,

Wingate, Kraska, & Beckert, 2012; Dehue, Bolman & Vollink, 2008). Parents' perceptions that cyberbullying is not common and that their child would not engage in such mean behaviour also suggests that they are unaware of online occurrences (Keith & Martin, 2005). It is noticeable from these studies that young people view parents as ignorant and not necessarily helpful when it comes to dealing with cyber violence, and this leaves young people with limited options.

Parents are also not selected as a source of help due to other reasons. For example, most parents in the study conducted by Gasior (2009) stated that they would report matters related to their child being cyberbullied to teachers or the principal, or approach the perpetrator's parents to discuss the issue. This is problematic in cases where the perpetrators were anonymous and not traceable. A significantly higher percentage of fathers were more likely to regard cyberbullying as less destructive than physical bullying compared to mothers. It depicts the interrelationship of gender with issues relating to trivialising violence.

Tarapar & Kellett (2011) recounted that victims who did report their experiences of cyberbullying stated that they reported them to people who they trusted. Younger participants informed friends and family members about cyberbullying, while older participants informed friends, the police, helplines or internet service providers. It is due to what UNICEF (2007) recognises as younger children regarding their families as important to them, while older youth valuing peer relationships more. Mishna, Saini & Solomon (2009) also identified the preferences of teenagers to discuss the problems they experienced in cyberspace with friends, as they believed that adults were oblivious to cyberspace. They also feared that their parents would invade their privacy (also recognised by Smahel & Wright, 2014). Similarly, Keith & Martin (2005) mention that victims of cyberbullying hold fears that their parents may react in a way that makes the situation worse. Hence, they preferred not to involve parents in aspects related to being violated online. This indicates that young people have insecurities about their parents' abilities to deal with those situations. However, Guo & Nathanson (2011) claim that parents' roles can reduce youth susceptibility to engaging in risky activities online by guiding their media usage.

In comparison, in a study by Thompson (2016), teenage participants expressed that they discussed problems they experienced to adults and spoke more about these problems to adults than friends. Girls were more likely to report being cyberbullied to their parents or friends compared to boys (O'Moore, 2012). This links to socially constructed gender norms related to

masculinity. Mascheroni & Olafsson (2014) claim that teenagers preferred to seek help from informal sources such as their family and friends compared to formal sources such as the police and mental health professionals. Hence, it is noticeable that cyber violence is perceived and dealt with in multiple ways. These findings demonstrate conflicting findings about adult involvement. Furthermore, victims are selective about who they share their experiences with, which compounds adults' attempts to intervene and possibly contributes to violent forms continuing to be perpetuated. In light of studies done on cyber violence, it is crucial to consider the wealth of research which focusses on the impact that cyber violence has on young people.

2.5.10 The impact of cyber violence on young people

The consequences of cyber violence are severe and real, even though there may be no relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in reality (Bertolotti & Magnani, 2014). Many studies associate cyber violence with negative social and psychological health issues for victims (Ang, 2015; Baldry, Farrington, & Sorrentino, 2015; Citron & Franks, 2014; Fenaughty & Harre, 2013; Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015; Kiriakidis & Kavoura, 2010; Van Ouytsel et al., 2016; Weinstein & Selman, 2016). It is also related to sexual and physical violence (Flach & Deslandes, 2017; Temple et al., 2016; WHOA (Working to Halt Online Abuse, 2011). Cyberbullying leads to risks related to mental health and interpersonal problems (Kubiszewski et al., 2015; Bhatta, Shakya, & Jefferis, 2014; Price, Chin, Higa-McMillan, Kim, & Frueh, 2013), and may result in agoraphobia and trauma (Brewer, Cave, Massey, Vurdelja, & Freeman, 2012). It is evident that the impact of cyber violence on victims is multifaceted and is, therefore, a pressing concern.

Cyber violence hinders rights to freedom of expression and safety (Kaye, 2017). Trolling attempts to oust victims from participating in online forums (Lumsden & Morgan, 2017). Feminists encounter dangers such as threats of gender violence online (Berridge & Portwood-Stacer, 2015). This shows backlash from perpetrators to curtail women's appropriation and participation online. There are gendered underpinnings of online risks (Karaian, 2014; Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019); for example, people speak to female online users about exercising responsible online behaviour, rather than male online users. It, therefore, demonstrates that women are under surveillance online as a result of double standards that create gender inequalities.

Cyberbullying causes interference to school functioning and undermines safety (Feinberg & Robey, 2008). Beran & Li (2007) recognised that cyber violence leads to absenteeism and tardiness among victims. Cyberbullying also contributes to victims experiencing difficulty in concentrating or being able to study (Beran & Li, 2007). Social media abuse has a negative impact on academic performance (Alwagait, Shahzad, & Alim, 2015). Cyber violence victims tend to drop out of school (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012), as victims are sometimes afraid to go to school (Gerson & Rappaport, 2011). Sincek, Duvnjak & Milic (2017); Li (2007) found that perpetrators attain low grades. It is glaring that cyber violence hinders learners' schooling and ultimately has adverse effects on their educational goals.

Other studies also showed that the impact of cyber violence affects daily living and interactions with others. For example, from their investigation amongst 50 girls aged 16-20 years from Bangladesh using a mixed-method approach, Monni & Sultana (2016) ascertained that due to cyberbullying, homes are not refuges for victims any longer. Cyberbullying causes a decline in the quality of family relationships (Badenhorst, 2011; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Li, 2010; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). Cyberbullying is associated with disrupted relationships (Wong, Chan, & Cheng, 2014; Schultze-Krumbholz & Scheithauer, 2009). Victims of cyber violence may become socially isolated (Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman, & Eden, 2012). Ultimately, these occurrences may result in suffocation and a lack of happiness amongst victims, making their lives unbearable.

In their Canadian-based research, Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., (2014) drew data from a Youth Risk Behaviour Survey amongst 3035 participants aged 11 to 20. Victims of cyberbullying and physical bullying were likely to skip breakfast owing to depression. Finkelhor & Asdigian (1996) associate breakfast skipping with the potential to affect the well-being of a student negatively. Experiencing cyber violence is associated with a stomachache, headaches, sleeping problems and reduced appetite (Laftman, Modin, & Ostberg, 2013). Online abuse results in physical problems such as limited energy and heart palpitations (Lewis, Rowe, & Wiper, 2017). Cyber victimisation results in poor coping strategies (Wright & Li, 2013). Victims engage in aggressive behaviours to deal with the anger and frustration experienced (Wright & Li, 2013). Cyberbullying contributes to the loss of lives of both learners and teachers (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). These studies indicate evidence of learners' physical well-being being negatively affected as a result of cyber violence.

Being cyber victimised contributes to negative emotions (Wright & Li, 2013). Raskauskas & Stoltz (2007) recorded that victims of cyber violence felt hopeless and powerless. Being harassed online contributes to problems related to sleep (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Victims of cyber violence suffer from stigma, anxiety, low self-esteem (Bilic 2013; Drouin, Ross, & Tobin, 2015; Hamm, Newton, Chisholm, Shulhan, Milne, Sundar, & Hartling, 2015) and depression (Parris, Varjas, Meyers, & Cutts, 2012; Lam, Cheng, & Liu, 2013; Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Girlguiding's (2013) study explored participants' comments about technology leading to communication which constantly played on receivers' minds, showing a sense of uneasiness experienced. Findings from these studies show evidence of victims enduring mental, emotional and psychological harm

In Uganda, Nagaddya, Kiconco, Komuhangi, Akugizibwe & Atuhairwe (2017) administered a semi-structured questionnaire to generate data from 280 teenagers. The research elicited findings that more than half of the participants expressed that their sexual behaviour altered after being exposed to videos, images, messages, and other sexual contents posted online. This highlights the relationship between online exposure and offline behaviours. Unwanted invitations to sext can be traumatising and victimising, especially for young people with a history of being abused (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007). It can affect a person even after their schooling career, as they enter college or the working world (Dempsey et al., 2009). Therefore, cyber violence should not be trivialised due to the lasting negative impact it has on victims.

Perpetrators of cyber violence are associated with being hyperactive, with problematic smoking and drunken behaviours and feeling unsafe at school (Sourander et al., 2010). Sincek, Duvnjak & Milic (2017) found that perpetrators experience high-stress levels. It shows adverse effects not only on the victims but also those who violate others. In their study of Asia and Pacific Islands youth, Goebert, Else, Matsu, Chung-Do & Chang (2011) found that cyberbullying was linked to teenagers' increased substance abuse. Hence, it is evident that cyber violence is associated with self-destructing behaviours.

Victims reported not wanting to disclose matters to others, believing that they could do nothing about it (Lewis, Rowe, & Wiper, 2017). There are also cases where victims of cyber violence face adverse reactions from others after being violated. For example, victims of sextortion who contacted law enforcers faced negative responses, such as it being their fault, or being dismissed by law enforcers who stated that there was nothing they could do (Wolak et al.,

2018). Sometimes victims are not believed (Monni & Sultana, 2016). These reactions may hinder the achievement of justice. This section reflected the extensive research about the harsh social, emotional, psychological, mental and physical impact of cyber violence on young people. Having taken into account various broad aspects of cyber violence and young people, the section that follows focusses on literature that relates to young people's understandings and experiences of cyber violence.

2.5.11 Young people's understandings and experiences of cyber violence

While there is a dearth of research about teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence, researchers have conducted some studies related to the phenomenon. Children and youth are growing up in various social and economic contexts and have different media experiences (Ponte, Simoes, & Jorge, 2013). Furthermore, there is research which shows that the youth are aware of how to use modern technology, but have a poor understanding of the consequences of particular online behaviour (Tripathi, 2017), and this is a concern. It suggests that there are gaps in youth understandings of crucial issues that affect them.

Research shows that youth victims are not able to identify themselves as victims, and sometimes accept cyberbullying, viewing it as normative (Almeida, Correia, & Marinho, 2009). Youth also use terms such as "drama" to refer to the issue because they aim to downplay their experiences of cyberbullying in an attempt to maintain their agency and to avoid painting themselves as victims (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). This differs from a study by Livingstone et al. (2014), where participants expressed their shock and disgust at violent online content. On a similar note was a study by Mishna, Saini & Solomon (2009) who conducted FGDs amongst 38 participants in grades 5-8 from five schools in Toronto, Canada. They declared that while some participants viewed cyberbullying as not being a serious problem, others considered it to be serious owing to the inability of a person to share the experience with others and perpetrators not feeling guilty about their behaviour. These studies highlight that young people's attitudes to cyber violence are not uniform, possibly due to their different online experiences and how they are socialised.

O'Moore (2012) found that more girls than boys regarded cyberbullying as wrong. Furthermore, more boys than girls believed that being victims of cyberbullying did not bother them, as it was part of life and was acceptable, in that way normalising it. It shows that participants' attitudes to cyber violence were conditioned according to gender stereotypes.

There was further evidence of trivialisation in a study done by Ortega et al., (2012) who administered surveys to 5860 teenage boys and girls in Italy, Spain and England. They identified that victims of cyberbullying are less affected by this phenomenon. This is possibly owing to lack of awareness about cyberbullying or perceptions of it being less severe than physical bullying.

Zilka (2017) carried out a mixed-method study amongst 345 Israeli teenagers and children. Participants demonstrated a medium to high level of awareness of e-safety (safety in online spaces) and online dangers. However, the results were different in research done by Ojanen, Boonmongkon, Samakkeekarom, Samoh, Cholratana, Payakkakom & Guadamuz (2014) who administered a mixed-method study utilising surveys, FGDs and in-depth interviews amongst 1234 participants aged 15-24 years from Thailand. They stated that participants held narrow perceptions about cyber violence, which is concerning.

Weibel & Fern (2012) surveyed 140 male and female college students in America. Most of the female respondents maintained that falsely representing oneself in terms of gender or personality, or using discriminatory language as a joke, was cyberbullying. However, male respondents believed that using discriminatory language was an acceptable way of interacting. It depicts gender differences in opinions regarding what is considered harmful.

Dehue, Bolman & Vollink (2008) studied 1211 participants from primary and secondary schools and their parents in the Netherlands using questionnaires. The most common forms of cyberbullying were gossiping and name-calling. Comparatively, in a quantitative study administered by Moyo (2017) amongst 221 participants aged 14-21 years from Soweto in Gauteng, SA, participants demonstrated that most learners felt that outing and masquerading were the most distressing forms of cyberbullying. Dehue, Bolman & Vollink (2008) found that young people mostly ignore cyberbullying or pretend to ignore it. Furthermore, many participants in the same study stated that they did not talk about bullying or about being victims of it, despite its seriousness. It is attributed possibly to social stigma, which is associated with bullying and discourages youth from reporting it (Tripathi, 2017). Therefore, studies about this phenomenon are necessary to raise awareness about this crucial issue and deal with it because, in certain instances, young people tend to avoid such issues, in that way not according the necessary attention that it deserves.

In their American-based study, Talwar, Gomez-Garibello & Shariff (2014) researched 154 boys and girls aged 12-16 years. The scholars developed vignettes related to online behaviour and required participants to assess the protagonist's actions. Most participants regarded false posts about others as an example of cyberbullying intended to cause harm and an imbalance of power which teenagers evaluated as unfavourable. Some of the respondents admitted to participating in cyberbullying. Female participants who engaged in cyberbullying were more able to identify cases of cyberbullying than female participants who did not cyberbully. It suggests their recognition of what is considered to be harmful. There were perceptions that older teenagers were more experienced online, but regarded as less sensitive to online behaviours and at higher risk of being threatened and harassed online, mislabelling it as "jokes." This shows that cyberbullying is taken nonchalantly at times which promotes negative online behaviour.

Trivialising cyber violence was also evident in research undertaken in Canada by Cassidy, Jackson & Brown (2009) amongst 365 boys and girls from grades 7-9 by adopting the survey method. Participants held beliefs that bullying online was just words and unable to hurt a person. It undermines the negative impact of this serious phenomenon and normalises harmful behaviours. These studies depict that teenagers recognise the prevalence of cyber violence but sometimes belittle its impact.

Whittaker & Kowalski (2015, study 2) adopted related methodology in the USA, amongst 143 male and 66 female participants aged 18-25 years. Participants regarded aggressive comments to peers as offensive and less acceptable. However, they viewed aggression towards random people online as acceptable. This is probably linked to the value that young people place on their relationships with others.

O'Dea & Campbell (2012) researched 400 male and female respondents aged 12-17 years in Australia, utilising online surveys. Participants in their study regarded contact by strangers, receiving prank calls or a large number of emoticons, gossiping and name-calling as experiences of cyberbullying. Most participants had privacy settings, a small percentage did not have these settings, and some participants held uncertainties about it. Most participants who utilised SNSs accepted friend requests from strangers, yet felt discomfort around issues related to strangers accessing their profiles. These findings are parallel to Odora & Matoti's (2015) study, whereby a large number of participants communicated with unknown people online. These studies point out young people's understandings of what cyberbullying entails and

dynamics related to their usage of security mechanisms which are necessary in maintaining online safety.

Pradeep & Sriram (2016) adopted the questionnaire method to research 121 teenagers in Mumbai, India. Teenagers were aware of cyberspace not being completely safe. However, most participants claimed that they had positive experiences online. It denotes evidence of denial. Popovac & Leoschut (2012) remarked that while youth are aware of risks associated with using online spaces, negotiating safe usage of online spaces is lacking and therefore problematic. Li (2007) also comments that teenagers are not adequately prepared to deal with online risks. This lack of preparation leads to risky conditions online.

Tarapdar & Kellett (2011) suggest that youth proficiency in utilising technology does not exclude them from being violated in cyberspace as participants spoke about resisting control mechanisms on the internet and bypassing age restrictions easily, which is dangerous. These findings suggest that teenagers are mostly aware of the risks online but do not necessarily interact online safely, which is a concern.

In terms of experiencing and perpetrating cyber violence, Borzucka-Sitkiewicz & Leksy (2018) carried out a mixed-method study amongst 390 participants aged 13-16 years. More than 90% of respondents experienced cyber violence as victims, perpetrators or bystanders, but mostly as victims or bystanders. The researchers identified that victims felt negative emotions but did not take any measures to prevent such situations. It shows that they belittle severe issues and possibly believe that measures are ineffective in dealing with the challenges they face, which may continue to perpetuate violence.

Lwin, Li, & Ang (2012) conducted a similar study related to protective measures by adopting the survey method amongst 557 boys and girls aged 12-19 years in Singapore. In this study, most participants claimed they had been victims of online harassment at least once. Furthermore, despite such experiences, they were not motivated to utilise protective measures. This was because they perceived that they were at low risk of being susceptible to online harassment and believed that they would experience more positive than negative events. Here too, there is evidence of not maintaining a serious attitude to online safety. Related to this, Chou and Huang (2010) recounted a low percentage of reporting cyberbullying amongst participants for several reasons. The reasons included fear of landing themselves in trouble, being fearful of the bully worsening attacks, and fears of rejection from the in-group. On a

similar note, findings from Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown's (2009) research reflected that one of the reasons for not reporting being violated was that victims were fearful of the perpetrator exacting revenge and being labelled by others as "informers." It shows the helpless plight of victims.

Another study that focussed on teenagers' experiences of cyber violence was a Canadian study. In this study, Mishna et al. (2012) drew data from surveys completed by a diverse sample of grade 6-11 boys and girls. More than 50% of the participants stated that they were involved in cyberbullying as perpetrators, victims or both. From this study, a category of bully-victims also emerged, as some individuals bullied and were also victims of bullying online. The reason for this phenomenon was that individuals wanted to exact revenge over those who bullied them. It shows evidence of role reversal.

There were also studies done about understanding cyber violence concerning social contexts. Oosterwyk (2013) investigated the nature, prevalence, and factors contributing to and implications of mobile bullying in seven schools in Cape Town, SA, amongst 3621 learners aged 14-18 years utilising qualitative and quantitative research methods. Teenagers did not display that they had sufficient knowledge about mobile bullying and its consequences. The majority of respondents were uncertain if their school had an anti-mobile bullying policy. The power of anonymity, lack of knowledge about mobile bullying regulation, teenagers' access to devices, and the competency of individuals to use mobiles to bully were key factors that contributed to mobile bullying. Bullying was related to crime and unemployment in the area and whether the use of ICTs was endorsed. Most respondents were mobile bullied outside of school, compared to in school. The study is crucial as it adds to our knowledge of the factors that influence cyber violence amongst teenagers.

The studies that I focussed on in this section reflect young people's understandings and experiences of cyber violence concerning the forms of cyber violence, victim and perpetrator identities, their views on it and reactions to it. Research specifically about teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence is sparse. However, there are some studies related to gendered experiences of cyber violence.

2.5.12 Gendered experiences of cyber violence

Crooks (2018) adopted a participatory video method and FGDs to research 112 girls aged 15-18 years from Canada. The study showed that girls think productively, critically and resistantly about technologies. Participants were critically aware of the constraints they faced online and stated that they faced a range of cyber cruelties in subtle and extreme forms. Few respondents felt that being part of a marginalised group increased youth chances of being harassed or ridiculed online. It was evident that girls struggle with sexist tropes circulated online. Offline challenges faced were amplified online due to the entrenchment of sexist norms. Self-produced images were associated with cyber violence, and participants referred to objectification several times. It was also noticeable that girls receive positive validation when they are mean online, in the form of likes, for example. The participants suggested that adults were "out of touch" regarding digital culture, more specifically, the significance of social media in young people's lives. This study reflects that young women are aware of and understand the issues that prevail in online spaces and affect them, especially by their online and offline conduct being under surveillance.

Another study about gendered experiences of cyber violence is a study that Thompson (2016) conducted amongst 130 girls aged 13 years in Australia, utilising online surveys, group interviews (virtual classroom activities) and online reflective journals to generate data. Talking was viewed as a defining feature of girls' friendships which is not surprising and points to notions of femininity. Participants possessed a reasonable awareness of the dangers that existed in cyberspace and mostly attempted to interact safely online by participating responsibly, ensuring the privacy of their profiles and blocking strangers and offensive people. None of the participants admitted to engaging in risky behaviours online, even though they made claims that they utilised the names of other girls to conceal their identities or made up lies online to appear trendy. Miliford (2013) posits that girls experiencing pressure to conceal their gender online creates possibilities for their identities as women to be harmed. The participants in Thompson's (2016) study recounted how other girls caused problems online, misused their friends, acted tough, called others names and utilised foul language. They also made rude comments about other's appearances, gossiped, told secrets, showed off, spammed on Facebook, and shared inappropriate content and images.

Participants in Thompson's (2016) research stated that girls of their age could be secretive, mean, concerned about being popular and wanting to get a boyfriend online. This suggests evidence of the 'othering' phenomenon, which was a significant finding in this study. Some girls tried to solve problems with people whom they knew face-to-face, while some ignored or deleted the messages or logged out. Citron (2009) also mentions this as a response to online harms experienced by female victims. They go offline or downplay their stereotyped feminine attributes, while some girls engage in stereotypical masculine behaviour and downplay stereotypical feminine qualities to deflect online abuse. However, Vandoninck, d'Haenens & Roe (2013, p.60) associated cyber violence with online resilience. The researchers define online resilience as "being able to deal with a negative experience online, that is, not remaining passive but displaying problem-solving coping strategies to protect oneself from future harm." Nevertheless, this does not suggest that people should condone cyberbullying. Thompson's (2016) research study showed that despite girls possessing knowledge about the dangers online, they conducted themselves in ways which can be safe at times but also risky in certain instances. Their conduct depends on the situations that they encounter and their views based on it. The researcher acknowledged that while there have been efforts to strive towards cyber safety, online dangers continue to exist. Future researchers must take this into account.

Ging & O'Higgins Norman (2016) also attained findings about gendered experiences of cyber violence. They researched 116 girls aged 14-17 years in Ireland by utilising questionnaires, individual in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. Despite Facebook's popularity, more than 50% of the participants found something on the site to be upsetting and claimed that online encounters were not always civil. Contradictions were apparent in the claims made about everyone getting along online despite most participants stating that they witnessed or experienced different degrees of conflict online, showing evidence of being oblivious to online aggression and downplaying it. It also depicts that teenagers' cyber experiences vary. Most participants in Ging & O'Higgins Norman's (2016) study interacted online with people who they knew. They indicated that they were not included in popular cliques as people advised them to avoid cliques classified as goths, drinkers, smokers, clever girls, town girls and rich girls. This highlights the labelling of several types of people in cyberspace due to their conduct. Manago, Graham, Greenfield & Salimkhan (2008) associate virtual presentations of a person as producing labels for people which legitimise particular traits of teenagers' identity.

Participants in Ging & O'Higgins Norman's (2016) research reported that bitchiness and girls not always being indirect in terms of the comments they made led to disputes erupting. Exclusions, insults and rows online fizzled out or resolved online, but sometimes meant the end of a friendship. Boys were insulted more about sexual orientation, while girls reported insults related to physical appearances, which Hoff & Mitchell (2009b) also identified. It is not surprising that gender differences prevail online, as this is also the case with offline spaces. Girls' online conduct and their ability to bully illustrate that they exercise negative power online. Participants claimed that girls responded to upsetting comments by avoiding online spaces (also noted by Tustin, Zulu & Basson, 2014), ignoring abusive content, or changing their contact numbers, compared to boys. Girls were reluctant to refer to hurtful behaviours online as cyberbullying, owing to ambiguity and the fact that they wanted to avoid causing trouble or drawing attention to themselves. Furthermore, they did not confront aggressors, report harmful incidents, or discuss the conflict openly with friends, owing to fears of losing valued friendships and believing notions that girls are naturally mean. It shows that girls' reactions to their experiences online are complicated, even though they sometimes downplay it which escalates risks.

Lewis, Rowe & Wiper (2017) carried out a qualitative study also drawing upon gendered experiences online. They researched 226 female participants in the UK by conducting online surveys and in-depth interviews. The researchers did not study teenage girls, but I selected the study for review due to its focus. I also included this study since issues like cyber violence, as shown in this study, prevail amongst women in adulthood too. Hence, it is a prominent concern. Other than misogyny and abusive language, online threats to rape or kill women also prevail (Lewis, Rowe, & Wiper, 2017). It is similar to findings by Demos (2016), who recognised that half of the abusive content sent contained the words 'whore' or 'slut.' This shows the derogatory nature of abuse online. Along with facing sexual threats online, girls' looks are also disparaged (Citron, 2009; Mantilla, 2015). It was evident that victims experience online abuse both privately and publicly, and traces of online abuse remain and infiltrate the online identities of women. While being abused online was significant, traumatising and harmful, a small percentage of participants found it normal or indicated that it did not bother them, even in severe cases (Lewis, Rowe & Wiper, 2017). These opinions downplay the victims' experiences. From this study, it is evident that participants recognise the gendered nature of abuse in cyberspace which fosters gender inequalities.

Differing from the study mentioned above, which studied women, in a study done in Northern Ireland, Kernaghan & Elwood (2013) studied teenage girls. The researchers used questionnaires and online interviews to research 494 teenage girls. They cascaded that instant messaging (IM) provided opportunities to cyberbully in indirect ways by sending conversations held with people to others, which was a common form of bullying. It demonstrates that cyberbullying occurs implicitly, owing to what Paul, Smith & Blumberg (2012) regard as an evolution of bullying as a form of cyber violence in terms of technological features. Kernaghan & Elwood (2013) associated communication utilising IM as being interwoven with friendships that girls had at school, which led to bullying, which begins at school and continues over IM, and vice versa. It suggests that physical interactions have the potential to contribute to bullying in cyberspace. A large number of teenagers stated that they took on alternate personas and engaged in activities online, which they would not have engaged in real life. Moreover, SNSs provide users with the opportunity to create profiles, a particular impression they want to display and circulate messages publicly or privately. Hence, it is evident that identities in online spaces are fluid.

Kernaghan & Elwood (2013) recounted situations where a group of girls would be abusive towards one girl. This relates to findings by Ringrose (2008) who states that in terms of gender and discourses surrounding girls' experiences in cyberspace, girls are positioned in various ways, such as victims of bullying, sexualisation, and consumerism, or regarded as naturally bitchy and mean towards other girls. Participants expressed that victims experienced humiliation when the perpetrators drew more people into the situation. At times, girls posted photographs of other girls, which they damaged to embarrass the girls, in that way, causing distress to the victims (Kernaghan & Elwood, 2013). It is similar to Lewis, Rowe & Wiper's (2017) study, whereby women were not only victims of male violence but also victims of violence that girls and women perpetrate. This shows their exercise of negative power online.

The literature reviewed in this section shows that cyber violence experiences are gendered, and especially teenage girls face multiple vulnerabilities in online spaces.

2.6 Conclusion and implications for the current study

From the review of the literature, it is evident that violence amongst the youth in physical spaces – especially schools – continues to be a concern. Compounding matters, concerns about cyber violence and its effects on young people, especially women and girls, are proliferating. While there have been many studies that have investigated cyber violence in an international context, there is not a large volume of research related to the phenomenon in SA. The studies mostly focus on the types of cyber violence, its nature, mediums of perpetration and its impact.

Given the context of patriarchy, gender inequality and gender violence in SA, as well as the burgeoning rate of cyber activities, research on girls' vulnerability to violence in cyberspace deserves more attention. There is little literature exploring teenagers' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them, especially in the South African context. Given the vast literature that shows the normalisation of violence against women in physical spaces, it is crucial to establish whether teenage girls identify abusive behaviour on SNSs, to work towards its reduction.

One of the aims of this study is to explore what are teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence. From the review of literature, it is evident that gender features in complex ways. Girls continue to be the main victims of cyber violence. However, in some cases, girls perpetrate cyber violence against girls and boys. Boys are mainly the perpetrators of cyber violence, but there are also instances where girls violate them. Against this background of teenage girls facing a range of undesirable consequences stemming from cyber violence, and the scarcity of research about their understandings and experiences of cyber violence, it is crucial to study them.

In terms of methodology, scholars mostly researched cyber violence using quantitative methods and mainly conventional methods. Few studies adopted mixed methods and virtual methods to study the issue. The current study extends existing work by conducting research using both online and offline methods to generate rich textual data about an online phenomenon. I conducted one of the methods of research for this study on a Facebook group that I created.

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on gender violence as an international concern. I highlighted the challenge of violence in cyberspace, then took account of the forms of cyber violence and mediums of perpetration. I then reviewed research studies relevant to cyber

violence amongst the youth, drawn from a myriad of countries globally and on the continent of Africa. I presented the implications of the reviewed literature, bringing the chapter to a close. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework employed in this study.

Chapter Three: Theoretically framing a study on cyber violence and teenage girls.

3.1 Introduction

As indicated previously, the current study explores teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. It is underpinned by theories on the social construction of gender. I also draw on Feminist post-structural (FPS) theory. In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework underpinning this study. I begin by providing relevant definitions, such as theory and theoretical frameworks, followed by emphasising the functions of a theoretical framework to a research study. Thereafter, I explain theories on the social construction of gender. Having synthesised the literature that positions cyber violence as a gendered phenomenon, it is useful to understand how gender operates in different spaces, including cyberspace. I then discuss FPS theory and how it is suitable for this research.

3.2 The role of a theoretical framework

A researcher must understand why a theoretical framework is essential to select a theory or theories that are appropriate to frame one's study. Theoretical frameworks are the foundation wherein knowledge is constructed for a study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). According to the scholars, the theory selected provides a conceptual basis to understand, analyse and design ways to investigate a problem (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Frameworks are regarded as maps for a study and provide a rationale for developing research questions (Fulton & Krainovich-Miller, 2010). It suggests that a theoretical framework influences one's research design and is, therefore, a vital ingredient in a study. Theoretical frameworks are "derived from an existing theory (or theories) in the literature that has already been tested and validated by others and is considered a generally accepted theory in the scholarly literature," (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p.16). Theorising is, therefore, a process that helps a researcher to contextualise a study, take into account the work done by others in the field and formulate an appropriate path to design and conduct a study.

Theoretical frameworks add value to research studies in several other ways, not just related to forming the basis of a study and its design. For example, the literature and theoretical framework are linked and can be used to develop and understand the different and also

interconnected parts of a literature review (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). They also offer a common lens to support one's thoughts on a particular problem and provide an anchor to analyse the data generated (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It is clear that theoretical frameworks assist a researcher in building the components of one's study, making sense of the findings meaningfully and logically linking the different components of the study. Ultimately, selecting an excellent theoretical framework offers readers all the necessary components required to understand the researcher's assemblage of the study.

Grant & Osanloo (2014) make particular recommendations for researchers to ensure that their studies are theoretically sound, which I focus on here. One should have an understanding of how to define and approach a research problem and state its rationale to enable the reader to understand better where one stands regarding the research problem. The scholars advise that one should begin by identifying one's own beliefs and consider theories that intersect well with one's epistemological value and broaden one's way of thinking about concepts in the study. One must develop knowledge about theories and understand the importance of the theories to oneself. Briefly review literature that supports the selected theories and consult dissertations and theses to gain an understanding of how others applied particular theories in their studies. Consider arguments that clash with one's theories and beliefs. Then the researcher should know how the selected theory connects to the problem, the purpose of the study, its significance and research design (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p.19). These scholars' recommendations suggest that selecting a suitable theory is not merely a linear process. It requires a researcher to know his/her positionality about the research and read widely. The researcher must also understand the theories and their value, evaluate several factors and know how the theory selected is suitable for the design and aims of one's study. I took these recommendations into account when selecting the theories used to frame this study on teenage girls and cyber violence. Given the complexity of this study, it was not possible to choose a single theory. I, therefore, found that the social construction of gender together with FPS to be useful.

3.3 The social construction of gender

Theories on the social construction of gender are relevant to this study as relations in cyberspace, like physical spaces, are also underpinned by socially constructed gender norms. These norms create a particular gender order which results in gender inequalities between male and female cyberspace users. Hence, it is crucial to focus on how gender is socially constructed.

Theories of gender as a social construction rejects the notion that gender is a product of nature and biology alone. I draw on the ideas of Butler (1990), who asserts that being male and being female is governed by dominant norms through which roles and identities are constructed. Connell (2005) aligns with this view and asserts that gender is best theorised as a social construct; a configuration of power through which gender roles and entitlements are ascribed within the social system based on understandings of what is masculine and feminine. According to Connell & Pearse (2015, p.2), "the social arrangements we call 'gender' concern the complex ways human reproduction, and reproductive bodies, are handled in the ever-changing life of human societies. These gender arrangements are often unequal." It suggests that gender is socially constructed and deals with dynamic relationships amongst people. Gender norms are:

> The assumptions, rules and guidelines that we call "norms" are part of the weave of everyday life. They are embedded in institutions as much as they are in individual heads. Gender norms are found in the economy, the state, mass media, law and education systems as well as families, neighbourhoods and intimate relations. (Connell & Pearse, 2015, p.2).

From this, we gather that gender norms are what society prescribes and dictates to us; they are pervasive and play a role in various sectors of life. They impact society at various levels. In society, children learn actively and conform quickly, sometimes even to violent norms. At the same time, teenagers sometimes tend to display exaggerated forms of masculinity and femininity or display deep concerns about gender (Connell & Pearse, 2015). Hence, gender norms contribute to conforming, displaying or becoming anxious about particular roles and a gender order socially inscribed for men and women. Connell (2011) refers to gender order in society as a structure of gender relations, which is fluid. It emphasises both the enduring and ever-changing nature of gender constructions.

Gender power influences gender-specific roles for men and women within society and institutions (Connell, 2000). Gender as a social construction acknowledges the social positioning of men and boys as dominant, powerful and authoritarian, and women and girls are socialised as passive and subordinate (Connell, 2000). It positions boys and men as superior and, therefore, worthy of numerous opportunities, while how women and girls are constructed disadvantages them and deprives them of opportunities.

The social construction of gender is also replicated and established in educational institutions, where gendered identities are created (Connell, 2000). The creation of gender-specific roles for boys and girls in society entrenches gender inequalities by specifically regulating girls' behaviours. Masculinities and femininities are gendered identities that are shaped by societal processes. Masculinity refers to traits that society stereotypically attributes to boys or men, such as being strong, ambitious, authoritative, technically competent, self-sufficient, and in control of one's emotions (Connell, 1987). Particular masculinities are also associated with aggressive behaviour. On the other hand, femininity comprises traits that are stereotypically associated with girls or women, such as being caring, sensitive, and empathetic (Kolb, 1999; Heilman, 2012). These traits also include being soft, nurturing and physically attractive. Feminine traits are behaviours that are deemed acceptable for girls and women, especially in the context of patriarchy. Girls are constructed as objects of sexual desire, rather than having desires of their own. They are abused, exploited and viewed as "the other" (Paechter, 1998). Femininities are socially constructed as opposite to masculinities. Connell (1987) defines femininities as practices that girls co-operate with and conform to or resist and states that masculinities are heightened as a result of the characteristics of femininities. These are some of the several qualities attributed to masculinity and femininity due to the social construction of gender. These socially constructed identities define how boys and girls conduct themselves in society.

Hegemonic masculinity, in particular, is defined as:

> "A set of values, established by men in power that functions to include and exclude, and to organise society in gender unequal ways. It combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women and other men), and the interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power and patriarchy." (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012, p.40).

This suggests that this type of masculinity entitles certain men to power, privilege and position while women and other men are subordinate. Hence, it is crucial to recognise that gender identities are multidimensional, hierarchical and not static or fixed (MacNaughton, 2000; Mayeza, 2017). It illustrates that gender identities are plural and are continually changing. It is necessary to consider this in the broad context that violence occurs in – one of unequal gender, whereby male power and authority are emphasised (Bhana, 2013). However, there is also evidence of resistance from girls (Parkes, 2015).

Given the vast literature that implicates gender norms in producing inequalities that render girls vulnerable to violence, theories on the social construction of gender will be useful in the analysis of the data in this study. This study is about cyberspace and in theorising aspects about it, it is essential to consider literature surrounding the gendered nature of space. The mistreatment of girls in society is due to a culture that lessens the value of women (Wilson, 2007). Children learn appropriate behaviours in families, schools and communities that are gendered sites wherein dominant ideas are reinforced and replicated (Kimmel, 2000). Schools are complex spaces wherein youth perform and negotiate their identities (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). Physical spaces are characterised by gender violence, as shown in chapter two. South African schools, in particular, are characterised by increased levels of physical violence, which render mostly girls vulnerable to harm (Parkes, 2015). In the context of the current study, focussing on an online phenomenon, the literature reviewed in chapter two positions the internet as a gendered space (Hall, 1996; Plant, 2000; Gajjala, 2000; Munt, 2001; Clark, 2007; White, 2003; Senft, 2008). It is also a space that is characterised by violence. The identities of teenagers being constructed and performed, contribute to certain experiences online and significantly, a particular gender order. Hence, theories on the social construction of gender are relevant to this study as it aims to glean insight into how gendered performances in cyberspace contribute to gender inequalities. FPS is a theory that places emphasis on transforming social relations like gender and is therefore suitable for use together with theories on the social construction of gender.

3.4 Post-structural feminism

Feminism is a highly contested concept which is concerned with the equality of men and women (Adichie, 2015; McCann & Kim, 2013). However, we can apply principles of post-structural feminism to "all practices in order to analyse how they are structured, what power relations they produce and reduce, [and] where we might [find opportunities] for transformation" (Weedon, 1987, p. 132). This challenges notions that FPS is solely about empowering women and girls. In a broad sense, post-structural feminism recognises the constitution of power, rationality, truth and knowledge within dynamic relationships instead of possessions (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010).

Foucault's ideas about power and language influenced Weedon's (1987) post-structural feminist theory. According to Foucault (1982), there is no uniformity regarding power relations, and that power depends on individual situations. Furthermore, power is a relationship

whereby actions influence other actions, and power is not merely a confrontation between two individuals but rather meaning, which one accords to the interaction (Foucault, 1982). Therefore, it is crucial to explore individual, institutional and social contexts where interactions occur to examine power relations and knowledge construction; understandings and experiences of cyber violence is one such example.

Individuals are not passive but are active and have choices in terms of how they position themselves related to different discourses (Gavey, 1989). Furthermore, Jackson (2001, p.386) regards the "self as a site of disunity and conflict that is always in process and constructed within power relations." Hence, this shows the fluid nature of identities and influences how individuals understand and experience various phenomena.

Aston (2016, p.2257) mentions that:

> Language is a crucial starting point for feminist post-structuralism. Our everyday language interprets the concreteness of feelings, thoughts and experiences. The social or institutional language and corresponding meaning produced by institutions or groups of people can influence others to follow "normal" or "everyday" ways of living.

Language can also serve as an obstacle to understanding, or it can be a vehicle for freedom and liberation (Aston, 2016). Therefore, the language usage and verbal expressions of individuals in cyberspace may influence interactions negatively or positively. In this study, I analysed the words used by participants in the virtual group discussion and face-to-face interviews to gain insight into how they understand and experience cyber violence.

According to Weedon (1987, p.40-41), post-structural feminist theory uses concepts of "subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change." She adds that language is "the common factor in the analysis of social organization, social meanings, power and individual consciousness", as it enables people to express their meanings about their experiences and becomes critical for meaning to be contested (p.87). These ideas used in combination with the social construction of gender provides me with useful tools to make sense of teenage girls' articulations about the meanings they attach to their experiences of cyber violence. This is because cyberspace is a subjective, power-laden and socially constructed space where interactions occur.

There are various characteristics that FPS offers to this study. One of which being the use of language to "word the world as we know it" (St Pierre, 2000, p.483). Those who interact online express themselves verbally and also use non-verbal cues which have particular meaning. FPS conceptualises multiple positions in a manner that gives voice to constructing meaning and rewriting personal experiences to raise consciousness and resistance (Weedon, 1997). I anticipated that participants would narrate their experiences of cyber violence or that of other teenage girls, from their perspectives. I expected differences in participants' accounts due to subjectivity. This theory addresses questions about the exercising of social power and how social relations such as class, gender and race may be transformed (Weedon, 1987). It is significant to the current study as cyber violence is a phenomenon that stems not only from issues related to gender but also race and social class and examining this interrelationship and attempting to transform it is crucial.

FPS focusses on how social processes and structures shape our subjectivities (Weedon, 1997). It is located in fields where language, power and social institutions intersect and give meaning to subjectivity. It also takes into account that the "conscious awareness of the contradictory nature of subjectivity can introduce the possibility of political choice between modes of femininity in different situations and between the discourses in which they have their meaning" (Weedon 1987, p.7). Hence, this suggests that how teenage girls understand cyber violence may differ due to power dynamics online, how they are socialised and how they accord meaning to such occurrences using language.

FPS enables us to identify how people negotiate their values, personal beliefs and practices related to various beliefs, practices and values contained in social and institutional discourses (Aston, 2016). Socially constructed norms influence how people conduct and express themselves. Furthermore, individuals should not be homogenised due to their beliefs about why cyber violence prevails as there are possibilities for multiple interpretations. The mentioned theory recognises that "identity is not a fixed 'thing,' it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous—the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings" (Kondo, 1990, p.24). Here too, we identify the fluid and dynamic nature of identities. This is important to consider, especially when studying conduct in online spaces due to features like device screens, anonymity and people constructing their identities according to their preferences which may not necessarily be true. Multiple power relations operate simultaneously, rendering power as productive but also creating resistance (St

Pierre, 2000). Therefore, this theory shifts the way we examine power relations and advocates that we look at situations holistically. FPS contests binary ways of understanding the world and challenges victim-blaming to interpret situations differently (Carey, Dickinson, & Olney, 2017). Blaming victims places their conduct under surveillance and legitimises harm against them in specific spaces. Therefore, there should be alternate ways of dealing with situations to reduce bias.

FPS assists in interrogating the boundaries that exist and how they operate, as some boundaries are coercive and force people to conform to certain norms and some boundaries may be disruptive and not add any value (Carey et al., 2017). These norms hold people hostage within particular identities that force them to conform to stereotypes and certain notions which deprives them of their rights to freedom and dignity. FPS emphasises rationality and the dignity of an individual and his/her inalienable rights to privacy, liberty, justice, freedom of thoughts and pursuing happiness, irrespective of one's race, gender, class or creed (Kitzinger, 1987). This is critical, especially in online spaces where mainly young people contend with challenges such as discrimination based on race, class or gender and invasion of their privacy through some forms of cyber violence. FPS is useful in guiding analysis as it interrogates the meaning contained in words by paying careful and close attention to how participants narrate their stories (Aston, 2016). It is suitable for a study like the current study which focusses on teenage girls' and how they express themselves about their understandings and experiences of cyber violence.

It is against this backdrop of the particular characteristics of FPS that I have selected to use FPS. It is a useful theory since cyberspace is a subjective space where gender relations are reproduced, challenged or accepted, owing to multiple power relations operating. Critical aspects of FPS, such as language, social processes, identity construction, the challenging of binaries and a focus on individual rights, makes this theoretical framework appropriate and most relevant to the current study. FPS and theories on the Social construction of gender are related. FPS builds on and is built on the social construction of gender. Both theories suggest that identities are fluid. They focus on the construction and performance of gendered identities and glean insight into gendered performances which heighten gender inequalities.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the theories used to underpin this study. I began by discussing the social construction of gender, followed by FPS. I chose to use the social construction of gender and FPS theories for researching the three research questions underpinning this study. The chapter that follows outlines the methodology that I employed to conduct this study.

Chapter Four

Research design and methods of research.

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the theoretical framework underpinning this study. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research questions, paradigm, design and approach. After that, I discuss the research location, context and sampling. I then detail the data generation methods, processes and justifications for my methodological choices. Thereafter, I focus on ethical considerations, rigour, reflections on how my role as a researcher has shaped this study and the research challenges. Subsequently, I focus on the method of data analysis.

This study examines three broad research questions.

1. What are teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence?

2. How do teenage girls experience cyber violence?

3. Why does cyber violence prevail amongst teenage girls?

4.2 Research paradigm

I located the current study within the critical paradigm. Burrell and Morgan (1979) define paradigms as views of social reality. Furthermore, paradigms are "basic concepts of how to do research in a specific field with consequences on the levels of methodology and theory" (Flick, 2018, p.471). A paradigm is, therefore, the lens through which a researcher can view a study. Research conducted within the critical paradigm may apply feminist theory (Martens, 2015), and the critical paradigm is similar to post-structuralism (Foucault, 1980). This is because FPS focusses on transforming power relations.

According to Tracy (2013), the critical paradigm is "a way of viewing the world that is based on the idea that thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations and that data cannot be separated from ideology" (p.61). It is concerned with power dynamics within social structures and examines individuals and conditions in a situation based on social positioning (Martens, 2015). This paradigm also creates an awareness of power relations (Tracy, 2013). In doing so, it creates an avenue for questioning and also for transformation.

One of the characteristics of the theory selected for this study focusses on multiple power relations which operate simultaneously. It makes visible the link between the FPS theory and the critical paradigm. The critical paradigm deliberately addresses issues related to oppression and trust and is suitable for providing a voice to those who are less powerful or voiceless (Martens, 2015). Furthermore, the critical paradigm recognises that power differences have the potential to be destructive as people have a naturalising, inevitable and necessary view of their powerlessness (Tracy, 2013). These features of the critical paradigm make it suitable for studying cyber violence as it is a phenomenon that is coercive and vicious. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a voice and platform to those who are primarily affected by it, to express their understandings and experiences of it.

The critical paradigm aims to address political, economic and social issues related to conflict, oppression, struggle and power (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) and cyber violence is a social issue that prevails in society and mostly affects the lives of young people. According to Martens (2015), research is a construction instead of a discovery. When conversing and debating about situations related to 'what is better', knowledge is produced and moves beyond describing a situation to transforming it (Tracy, 2013). I believe that providing teenage girls with the opportunity to participate in this study and express themselves about cyber violence is an active construction of their understandings and experiences of the phenomenon. It has the potential of raising their awareness of how their gendered identity constructions may be reworked towards greater agency.

Critical research has a central focus on revealing agency concealed by social practices (Martens, 2015). In conducting this study, I acknowledged that while teenage girls are mainly victims of violence, they are also agentic online. Importance is attached to ethical obligations. This includes assisting in liberating and emancipating people who face situations characterised by immorality, injustice, lack of ethics and violence (Tracy, 2013). I strived to adhere to ethical principles which I discuss later in this chapter. It was especially important in a study dealing not only with a face-to-face data collection method but also conducting research online. It was also necessary as this study involved not only victims of cyber violence but also perpetrators of it. Critical research aims to empower research subjects and minimise power differences between the researcher and participants to emancipate and contribute to social transformation (Martens, 2015). Researchers in critical research make deliberate efforts to promote human rights and escalate social justice and mutuality (Martens, 2015). In the section on data

collection methods, I provide details about how I attempted to make participants feel comfortable speaking to me about private issues that are also sensitive. I also spoke to participants about the importance of interacting online in a safe, respectable and considerate manner. In light of the emancipatory nature of the critical paradigm and its suitability to FPS, I selected it as the paradigm for this study.

4.3 Research Design

Before focussing on the research approach, I clarify some of the terminology which I referred to in this chapter. Research methods are the tools and techniques for doing research (Walliman, 2017, p.1). It strengthens a research design (Wisker, 2009). Flick (2018) regards research design as "a systematic plan for a research project including who to integrate in the research (sampling), who or what to compare for which dimensions" (p.473). Hence, a research design deals with the procedure undertaken to generate the data, interpret the data and answer the critical questions.

In keeping with the aims of this study, I selected the critical paradigm which accords with post-structuralism. Being a feminist researcher, I chose to use post-structuralism to frame the research design and methodology of my study. St Pierre (2000, p.484) states that "the comfort of imagined absolutes and deep structures allows us, women and men, to avoid responsibility for the state of the world." She maintains that it is irresponsible to possess the attitude of 'that's just the way it is' because it places responsibility on certain absolute principles outside the domain of human activity. Similarly, it is necessary to investigate teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them, so that issues like cyber violence are not accepted, trivialised, legitimised and continually perpetuated.

4.4 Research approach

This is a qualitative study. Several scholars draw attention to various reasons for conducting qualitative studies. According to Bertram (2010), a qualitative approach is employed to achieve "depth" and "rich descriptions" to explore a particular phenomenon. Qualitative research studies the knowledge and practices of participants; it takes into account their viewpoints due to various social backgrounds and perspectives about them (Flick, 2018). Furthermore, Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins (2010) state that qualitative researchers focus on capturing the lived experiences of people and data about specific significant experiences that the participants have endured, related to socioeconomic status and several other factors. It is against the

backdrop of these features of qualitative research that this approach was deemed applicable to a study focussing on cyber violence which teenage girls are exposed to, as shown in the literature review. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) state that it is imperative to research a real-world situation, without the researcher or other sources influencing the research or manipulating the participants. Hence, I incorporated a cyber-based method to cater to this need.

Furthermore, the study, being of a sensitive nature, required information from participants who I did not compel to participate or pressure into a contrived setting. In qualitative research, some of the methodologies include individual interviews, FGDs, case studies, narratives, ethnographic and participatory research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). This list influenced my methodological choices, and I selected two from it.

According to Tuck & Mckenzie (2015), "ethnography has been concerned with place, or with the physical settings of the ordinary and their relationships to other material aspects of people's lives, such as household objects, animals, institutions, and technologies" (p.86). Ethnographers also utilise long periods in the social environment (Willis & Trondman, 2002). However, this study is not strictly an ethnographic study, owing to it not being possible for participants to spend long periods online to generate data due to their roles as learners and other roles. The current study adopts some of the principles of ethnography by focussing on a specific group of people (teenage girls) and their relationship to a phenomenon in a particular space (in this case it is both cyberspace and physical spaces). I also drew upon some of the features of cyber ethnography.

Cyber ethnography, according to Hallett & Barber (2014), is sometimes referred to as virtual ethnography. Cyber ethnography is a primary methodology that has emerged for researching cyberspace and is also known as netnography (Waldron, 2011). I chose to utilise cyberspace as one of the research contexts for various reasons, one of which being an urge by Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins (2010, p.699) for "postmodern interviews and focus groups to be extended by utilising the most ground-breaking media, including social networking tools." Studies in cyberspace are necessary, considering the constantly evolving technological era in which we live. Taking into account that this study focusses on a phenomenon in cyberspace but also related to physical spaces and is sensitive, I decided to utilise a blended approach to researching. A blended approach uses both online and offline methods to collect data. I discuss this in detail in section 4.8.

4.5 Location

I drew on participants from a selected secondary school in the province of KZN, SA. Craigieburn Secondary School (pseudonym) is a multiracial co-educational public school situated in a small coastal subtropical town called Umkomaas. The town falls under the Ethekwini Municipality and is located approximately 50 kilometres from Durban central. It has a population of approximately 3000 people with a racial make-up of African, Indian, Coloured and White people. The languages spoken by the people are English, Afrikaans, IsiZulu, Xhosa, Hindi, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu. Some of the activities in this town include farming (mainly sugar cane), fishing, production of paper pulp at the Sappi Saiccor Mill, quarrying, and furniture assembling.

I chose this research site since it was convenient for me to conduct the study there, as I teach at the school and live within the community. I was aware that there were a significantly large number of teenage school girls who regularly interact in cyberspace and sometimes discussed their experiences – both positive and negative – of communicating in cyberspace. It prompted and also intensified my curiosity about teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them.

Being a familiar face at the school, I anticipated that participants would possibly trust me. They would be able to open up about their social habits in cyberspace as opposed to me researching participants who were sceptical about interacting with someone they may have regarded as an outsider. They would possibly experience discomfort in divulging information about sensitive issues about their private lives. Despite me selecting Craigieburn Secondary school as the original research site for the study, I was open to the idea of inviting teenage girls from other secondary schools in neighbouring areas to participate in the study, especially where there could be a reduction in the sample size. However, a sufficient number of teenage girls from the selected school were interested in participating in the study, and I achieved the required sample size.

4.6 Context of the study

To research a phenomenon in cyberspace, it was useful to recruit participants who interact in cyberspace and work within the same platform that I was researching. This view is endorsed by Kamalodeen & Jameson-Charles (2016), who assert that cyberspace is a conducive space to utilise to study teenagers. From my conversations with learners and their interactions on the

school Facebook group, it was evident that Facebook was the most common SNS used (at the time of data generation). This agrees with the findings by Walker (2014), who claimed that Facebook is a commonly utilised SNS. Furthermore, a large percentage of teenagers say they use Facebook (Lenhart, 2015). I, therefore, decided to use Facebook as one of the sites for my research.

Facebook is a tool to develop social skills and a way in which teenagers can make new friends (Teppers, Luyckx, Klimstra, & Goossens, 2014). Facebook is also a site for news (Sveningsson, 2015), intimacy (Berriman & Thomson, 2014), identity formation (Sauter, 2013) and surveillance (Lee & Cook, 2015). These studies show that Facebook has multiple functions. In terms of cost, Goodwin (2016) states that Facebook is more cost-effective, owing to Facebook generating revenue from the sale of advertisements, compared to WhatsApp. Hence, it proved beneficial to utilise Facebook to generate data. There are three types of groups on Facebook – the open group, closed group, and secret group. I chose to create a secret Facebook group as a platform for this study. A secret Facebook group is a closed group that has higher security features. The participants' broader interactions were mainly on the closed Facebook group.

4.7 Sample

Researchers present several definitions for the term sampling. Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbon (2015) define sampling as "the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives" (p.1775). Gay, Mills & Airasian (2009) define sampling as a "process of selecting a small number of individuals for a study in such a way that individuals are good key informants who contribute to the researchers' understanding of a given phenomenon" (p.113). These definitions show that sampling is related to the selection of suitable participants. They are critical sources of information and will play a crucial role in achieving the aims of the study. I utilised convenience and purposive sampling. I then used the snowball sampling technique to recruit the desired number of participants. Purposive sampling is suitable for small-scale research and is less expensive and less complicated to set up (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). I purposefully selected 30 teenage girls who are online users and know about the phenomenon to participate in the study. I interviewed all the participants individually, and all of them also took part in the virtual group discussion. I considered this a sufficient number to generate rich and meaningful textual data for this study. I chose to focus on girls as a considerably large number of studies point out that teenage girls are most affected by cyber violence, which I discussed in Chapters One and Two. I selected 16-19-year-old girls

(in grades 10 and 11) to participate, as Facebook requests that users must be 13 years and over – although younger children also created accounts. This is due to Facebook users creating Facebook accounts with false details such as date of birth (Francis, 2017).

I selected this particular group with the knowledge that participants do not represent the wider population. Hence, there was no attempt to generalise the findings, bearing in mind a statement by Scott (2009) that qualitative data cannot be generalisable. Being aware of the power dynamics, I also preferred to include teenage girls whom I do not teach at school, owing to power relations between a participant and the researcher. I preferred this, taking into account that when studying teenage girls' experiences of cyber violence, some of the issues that emerge pertain to their sexualities which are of a sensitive nature. However, by no means do I suggest that there are no issues with power relations where the researcher does not have daily interactions with the participants.

I did not purposefully select heterosexual girls to participate in this study. However, all participants identified themselves as heterosexual. The sampling is also convenience sampling, as I conducted one of the data generation methods (focussed on later in the chapter) on the Facebook group I created. I planned to conduct the face-to-face interviews at school. However, I also provided participants with the opportunity for me to interview them at a mutually agreed-upon venue. It minimised travelling distances and travelling costs to interview participants.

To recruit participants, I visited form classes (grade 10 and 11 classes) and discussed the purpose, nature and process of the study. Grade 12 learners were excluded from participation owing to the nature and duration of the study, considering that they required additional time to study, attend extra classes and plan for their post-schooling careers. I invited teenage girls who were interested in participating in the study to meet me at a time that was convenient for them. I briefed the 20 participants who indicated their interest in participating. I handed parent consent forms to participants who were below 18 years old and information letters and consent forms to participants who were 18 years old and above. The forms issued to participants were for them to read, gain insight into the study and then sign to grant permission. I also used snowball sampling by requesting the 20 participants to provide me with the names of their friends in the school who also fit the criteria and would possibly be willing to participate. This is because they sometimes interacted with other teenage girls from the school in online spaces. I approached the ten prospective participants and enquired, whether they were interested in participating in the study. When I arrived at a sample size of 30 participants, I stopped

recruiting more participants. My intention of having a sample size of 30 participants was due to me requiring rich textual data. I also considered that in light of the focus of the study being of a sensitive nature, some participants might exercise their right to withdraw and the sample size would become reduced. Hence, snowball sampling is useful to this study as:

> "Researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested. These people are then used as informants to identify, or put the researchers in touch with others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p.135).

Furthermore, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) mention that snowball sampling is useful for research, especially in areas where access is difficult, and possibly because the topic is a sensitive one and cyber violence is a highly sensitive issue.

Table 1 which follows provides a summary of participants as at 3 October 2017.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants and how long they spent online

No.	Pseudonym	Race	Age (years)	Own or borrowed phone	No. of years interacting online	Approximate No. of hours spent online per day	Date of interview
1	Zinhle	African	**17**	**Own**	**4**	**5**	13 September
2	Hlengiwe	African	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**2**	14 September
3	Lisa	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**5**	14 September
4	Nomvelo	African	**18**	**Own**	**1**	**5**	15 September
5	Rita	African	**16**	**Own**	**6**	**11**	18 September
6	Amanda	African	**17**	**Borrowed**	**3**	**3**	18 September
7	Daisy	Indian	**17**	**Own**	**2**	**2**	19 September
8	Akira	Coloured	**16**	**Own**	**4**	**4**	19 September
9	Siphokazi	African	**18**	**Own**	**5**	**2**	20 September
10	Riya	Indian	**16**	**Borrowed**	**2**	**2**	20 September
11	Sasha	Indian	**16**	**Borrowed**	**2**	**3**	21 September

12	Minenhle	African	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**6-7**	21 September
13	Nolwazi	African	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**4**	21 September
14	Sofia	African	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**2**	21 September
15	Londeka	African	**16**	**Own**	**3**	**3**	22 September
16	Faith	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**6**	22 September
17	Tia	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**3**	**4**	22 September
18	Manuela	African	**17**	**Own**	**2**	**8**	26 September
19	Siphosethu	African	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**6**	26 September
20	Pooja	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**3**	**4-7**	26 September
21	Melanie	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**3**	**6**	26 September
22	Niharika	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**4**	**9**	26 September
23	Hayley	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**5**	26 September
24	Tyra-Lee	Indian	**19**	**Own**	**1 month**	**1.5-2**	26 September
25	Kristine	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**3**	**3-5**	27 September
26	Alisha	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**2**	**3**	27 September
27	Asanda	Coloured	**17**	**Own**	**3**	**3**	27 September
28	Zandile	African	**16**	**Own**	**1**	**2**	27 September
29	Kaylee	Indian	**16**	**Own**	**3**	**5-6**	27 September
30	Kim	Indian	**17**	**Own**	**3**	**1.5**	2 October

4.8 Data generation

4.8.1 Data generation methods, instruments and processes

This study required gaining in-depth knowledge and greater exploration of teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. In accordance with the aims of the study to research an online phenomenon, I employed a blended approach to generate data, as I stated previously. There are several reasons for my choice. I took into account a range of benefits associated with research in cyberspace, related to its advanced nature and it appealing to especially young people, but also acknowledged

various challenges related to research in that space. For example, I considered what Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) state about face-to-face encounters being time-consuming and intimidating, but some form of verbal communication being critical. Furthermore, Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) advise that such face-to-face communications are interpersonal. Robbins (2007) mentions that while non-verbal communication conveys particular meanings through gestures and facial expressions using avatars, this may be limited. Hence, I did not only adopt an online method to generate data, but I also included a face-to-face method to enhance the interaction between the participant and myself.

4.8.2 The data generation plan: in summary

I created a Facebook group to generate data for this study, utilising the steps outlined below.

Step 1: I visited https://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php and created a Facebook profile entitled 'Understanding Cyber violence: Craigieburn'.

Step 2: I completed the necessary information required related to myself as I was the administrator. On the bio of the group, I wrote a clear description of the reasons why the group exists.

Step 3: I customised settings about how I would like to receive notifications and alerts related to the profile created (that is, on my smartphone so that notifications were instant).

Step 4: I created a closed group (as mentioned earlier in this chapter) linked to the profile created.

Step 5: I invited all the participants (members on Facebook) to the Facebook account entitled 'Understanding Cyber violence: Craigieburn' then added them to a Secret group to participate. I invited participants into the group, and when they accepted their invite to the group, I required them to provide me with the code that I had personally given them after their written consent was submitted. After that, I asked them a few security questions to confirm that I was communicating with the person I initially liaised with and was interested in researching.

Step 6: I posted the code of ethics that all users on the group were required to provide feedback on and agree to abide by (explored later in this chapter).

Step 7: I allowed participants to interact on the space for about three weeks.

Step 8: During this time, utilising a semi-structured interview schedule, I conducted one individual face-to-face interview with each participant.

Step 9: Being informed by the data in the individual interviews, I then held a group discussion, including all the participants on the Facebook group. I held the discussion on a mutually agreed upon date. I also posted pictures to stimulate the discussion (Figure 1).

Step 10: I allowed participants to continue interacting with each other on the Facebook group, which provided me with an opportunity to observe their interactions and activity on the Facebook group I created, not the personal accounts of participants. I thanked participants for their time and encouraged them to share their views and thoughts on the group or by in-boxing me at any time during the data generation period.

Step 11: I conducted a validity check of interview transcripts with participants.

Step 12: I analysed the data and began to write the report.

Step 13: Participants received the report to read. After the examination process of the report, I will thank participants for their time once again and inform them that the Facebook group will be deactivated, as I have concluded the purpose for which I initiated the group.

4.8.2.1 Individual face-to-face interviews

The first method that I utilised to generate data was individual face-to-face interviews. In light of this, I discuss the benefits, disadvantages and recommendations related to this method. Robson (2011) states that researchers extensively use interviews to generate data in qualitative research. Furthermore, Petty, Thomson & Stew (2012) comment that individual interviews are useful methods to generate data when a researcher aims to explore in-depth the experiences and views of individuals. These characteristics fit with the aims of the current study. Oppenheim (1992) points out that exploratory interviews are designed in a way to be heuristic. They often cover topics that are emotionally loaded and require particular skills from the interviewer to handle the interview, enable participants to speak freely, and emotionally, with richness, depth, candour, honesty and authenticity about their experiences (Oppenheim, 1992). It is therefore noticeable that interviews can generate rich data, even in studies related to sensitive areas of research.

It is also essential to take into consideration the challenges associated with face-to-face interviews, as Lee (1993) warns that they can be imposing. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) highlight the time-consuming nature of such encounters. Therefore, it is essential to draw upon the recommendations for conducting interviews that scholars put forward. In selecting a venue for interviews, changing the location of interviews to places that are familiar to participants has the potential to elicit abstract and concrete varieties of data (Anderson & Jones, 2009).

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) recommend that the researcher be fully aware of how he or she asks the questions and refrain from adopting a forceful tone or a judgemental stance when interviewing participants. Duncombe & Jessop (2002) advise researchers not to be intrusive. It is crucial for researchers conducting studies about sensitive topics to be perceptive of the situation, take note of non-verbal and verbal cues of participants and ensure that there is no transferring of the researcher's personal beliefs, values and attitudes to the interview situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Taking this further, a researcher must adopt a sensitive approach towards the responses, experiences and emotions expressed by the participants. This is because research is not merely about generating data, but taking an interest in the participants and the study being of benefit to them. Researchers need to consider that in all interviews, "nonverbal communication can also be important for attaining a deeper shared meaning" (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2010, p.699). I regard these as sound recommendations to conduct interviews appropriately.

Individual face-to-face interviews were, therefore, a suitable data generation method for this study since it allowed me to interact with the participants privately. It was also to gain insight into the cyber activities of teenage girls (their own or other teenage girls), as participants may be wary of sharing their experiences on a Facebook group or via in-boxing. Furthermore, participants may not elaborate on their experiences fully in the cyberspace created for data generation, as their daily activities may be time-consuming, resulting in them not having sufficient time to type out detailed responses.

I provided participants with an opportunity to state their preference for the interview venue for various reasons related to comfort, transport issues, or not wanting to be identified by others. All participants chose the school they attend, which is the school I teach at, for the interview venue. The venue for the interviews was my classroom. They possibly felt comfortable speaking about their cyber experiences in a classroom compared to a library or their homes.

The interview venue was private, free of disruption, and conducive in generating genuine responses from the participants. I prearranged individual interview dates and times with participants, taking into account their availability and convenience. I conducted interviews with participants during times that they were available and gave them an approximate length of the interview. I took into account my free periods, lunch breaks, or their availability before or after school hours. I conducted twenty-three interviews during school hours (non-teaching periods or second lunch breaks), taking into account participants' responsibilities as learners and their transport arrangements.

I was aware of causing minimum disruption to the academic programme. When I conducted interviews during my non-teaching period, it was during a lesson where the participant's subject educator was absent from school (due to official or personal reasons), and the learner was also free during that time. However, 7 participants opted for me to interview them, either before or after school hours for personal reasons. In the case of these 7 participants, I sought permission from their parents and personally transported them to and from their homes to avoid them facing transport problems or dangers associated with them walking. They all lived within a 5-kilometre distance from the school.

I warmly welcomed each participant and conducted the interviews in a relaxed, conversational, non-intrusive, sensitive and appropriate manner. Classrooms are associated with particular power dynamics, such as the teacher being the figure of authority and the learner being the subordinate. I, therefore, attempted to downplay the power dynamics between the participant and myself by offering the participant an opportunity to select her seat; I then chose the seat next to her. Here again, I explained the purpose of the study to each participant and the opportunity to withdraw at any time. I explained the confidentiality, non-maleficence and beneficence clauses to each participant. I informed each participant that the interviews would be audio recorded. I informed them in writing on the consent form and verbally, before me switching on the recorder. I requested each participant to speak loudly, clearly, freely and confidently, and to seek clarity on questions which they did not understand. While I had an interview schedule to follow and required particular information from the participants, I asked participants to relax and not feel pressured. I also mentioned that they were allowed to exercise their right not to answer particular questions if they did not want to.

Before drawing up the semi-structured interview schedule, I read about issues relating to the topic which assisted me in predetermining the questions to be asked and also to gain the knowledge to probe the participants further. The interview schedule (Appendix 7) consisted of Part A (approximately 10 minutes), with ten closed-ended questions (to obtain biographic details of the participants), and 5 'ice-breaker' questions, and Part B (approximately 35 minutes), with closed and open-ended questions to obtain information about the participants' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. I recorded participants' biographic details so that I could make better sense of their individual and collective identities. I posed questions to participants to stimulate discussion, and I utilised additional questions to prompt and probe participants when I required further information in response to their comments.

I earnestly appealed to the participants to display honesty in their responses, as they would not be misjudged or treated in a shameful and humiliating manner by a public display of the data. I provided the participants with ample time to reflect upon the questions asked, gather their thoughts, respond, or seek clarity on issues they felt were difficult to understand. There were possibilities for participants to refrain from divulging particular details in an attempt to protect themselves or not wanting anyone to know private information about them. Being a researcher and requiring this essential information, I accorded respect and vigilance to the participant to maintain the serious nature of the interview. During the interview, I attempted to create a comfortable atmosphere to provide participants with the opportunity to answer the questions without feeling coerced by me or being fearful of my presence. I also wrote down notes of my observations of the participant, that is, verbal and non-verbal cues which enhance the meaning of the responses while the interview was being audio recorded using a tape recorder.

My purpose in conducting individual face-to-face interviews was not merely to ask a set number of questions, but to introduce a few questions and allow the participant the opportunity to respond freely. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) suggest that an interview is not merely a process to ask a specific number of questions to generate data, but is a social encounter that takes place between a participant and the researcher. Hence, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) advise that the researcher must encourage participants to speak freely about the topic by appropriately probing them to achieve depth in the responses received.

The interviews provided spaces for participants to speak in detail about their understandings and experiences of cyber violence. They expressed themselves with clarity and confidence and were not inhibited or reluctant to share their experiences and opinions with me. Some of the questions on the interview schedule pertained to teenage girls' experiences of cyber violence and private information to a certain extent. I was pleased to note that participants openly and willingly shared their experiences with me. It indicated that they trusted me and valued the opportunity to talk about their experiences.

I took each interview transcript back to each participant (face-to-face), as a validity check to review and validate that she made those comments; it was also an opportunity for her to add or retract comments that she made previously. The purpose of this process was to gather additional information that the participant may have left out during the interview. It may have also been any new information that was thought about as she read the transcript. All the participants validated that I correctly transcribed the interviews, and none of them chose to add or remove any of the responses.

Since requiring the participants to interact with me and each other on Facebook had cost implications, I issued airtime to the value of R100 (One hundred rands) to each participant to convert to mobile data for the next phase of data generation, that is, a virtual group discussion. From my interactions online, I estimated how much data participants would require for the virtual group discussion. When I informed participants of the amount of airtime I would issue to them, all of them were very excited about it. Later on, they also stated that it was more than enough for the virtual group discussion. Interactions on the Facebook group were occurring during the three weeks that I was conducting the individual face-to-face interviews. Once I completed conducting all the individual interviews, I conducted the second data generation method.

4.8.2.2 Virtual group discussion

I created a space where participants could interact with me and with each other on Facebook. Having had the individual private interviews, I was interested in discussion and debate between the girls. I conducted the virtual group discussion to stimulate discussion and yield data from collective interactions related to teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. The virtual group discussion occurred after the individual face-to-face interviews and was a live virtual group discussion. I chose to follow this sequence

because it provided me with the opportunity to become familiar with participants before interacting with them online in a discussion.

I invited participants onto the Facebook group before conducting individual face-to-face interviews. I provided participants with the opportunity to interact with each other before the group discussion. The reason for allowing participants this opportunity was because participants may have not been happy to interact with individuals who may be strangers to them. Considering that research in virtual spaces is still in its infancy, it was vital for me to read and become familiar with the trends and processes involved in online research, to design the research for this study.

In Chapter One, I defined the term cyberspace, stated its interchangeable terms, and listed some of the devices used to access it. Electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets or laptops were some of the devices involved in data generation. To inform the methodological choices for this study, I believed that it was essential to draw upon the benefits and criticisms of researching cyberspace. I also feature some recommendations put forward by scholars like Morgan & Symon (2004); Kamalodeen & Jameson-Charles (2016) and Davis, Bolding, Hart, Sherr & Elford (2004). They are some of the researchers who conducted research online to research various phenomena, such as collaborative learning, online learning and social interactions in cyberspace.

Crichton & Kinash (2003, p.2) state that virtual ethnography is "a method in which one actively engages with people in online spaces in order to write the story of their situated context, informed by social interaction." This suggests that it would be beneficial to research a virtual phenomenon utilising virtual space. VGDs (Virtual Group Discussions) are also "freed from the constraints of bodily presence" (Madge & O'Connor, 2002, p.96). It may play a pivotal role in reducing tension and nervousness. Davis et al. (2004) mentioned that the method is convenient and cost-effective and appeals to participants who prefer not to be interviewed face-to-face, possibly owing to the sensitive nature of the topic. It was useful for the current study as cyber violence is a highly sensitive issue.

Flick (2018) also discussed several benefits of doing research in cyberspace which I focus on here. This method is associated with higher levels of anonymity online for participants, due to the use of nicknames, user names and pseudonyms. It is easier to promote group interactions, and this contributes to more significant disclosures compared to real-world groups. The

researcher has more opportunities to intervene when shy participants are hesitant or unsure of procedures. Online focus groups allow for both asynchronous (non-real-time) and synchronous (real-time) participation. There is a reduction in lost contributions that may stem from hearing problems. Online research produces textual data, so one does not have to go through the time-consuming process of transcribing. It is therefore clear that online spaces are conducive for research due to the abundance of nuanced features in that space.

Kamalodeen and Jameson-Charles (2016) also recorded the benefits associated with adopting cyber-based research methods amongst young people, especially. Some of which include social networks being popular amongst teenagers, encouraging a "participatory culture" and providing a voice to them. This study shows that cyberspace is a useful space to research young people and can be a valuable platform for them to express themselves, which applies to the aims of this study.

However, there are also disadvantages associated with conducting research online, and I focus on some of those issues here. Kamalodeen and Jameson-Charles (2016) state that an unfriendly networking site may result in respondents struggling to participate. While many participants may be online, very few may take part (Kamalodeen & Jameson-Charles, 2016). Technical issues concerning online connections may disturb the discussions and impact the data. (Flick, 2018). Responses do not always follow the sequence of the questions (Davis et al., 2004). Hence, it is crucial to pay attention to such technical aspects to allow the discussion to proceed appropriately.

In light of such difficulties, researchers suggest some recommendations for research in cyberspace. Flick (2018) advises researchers to choose a relevant topic for discussion so that it attracts participants to participate in the study and the discussion. Participants should have online access, be accessible online, be familiar with online mediums and be capable of using an online device. One should get in touch with them in a space where you and the participant are both online simultaneously and able to directly exchange questions and answers.

Some participants may take time to respond, so it is essential to consider varying typing speeds (Flick, 2018). Researchers must take into account that online focus groups may be affected by external factors which influence participants, leading to them being distracted, dropping out and possibly affecting the data quality. I carefully thought about these recommendations when I designed my study as they were practical, meaningful and necessary to consider.

In light of their experiences of conducting VGDs, Madge & O'Connor (2002) recommend that researchers set up mutually convenient chat times, provide guidelines to participants and request participants to be online a few minutes early. They also suggest that researchers send a welcome message, introduce all the participants and provide the transcript to all participants after the interviews. The mentioned recommendations may foster higher levels of organisation and participation.

Concerning the problems that Davis et al. (2004) encountered in terms of posing questions, they recommended that researchers keep questions short and simple. Furthermore, researchers must consider how the use of emoticons and acronyms impact data and that there are possibilities for ambiguities, word plays, sarcasm and offensive statements to arise (Davis et al., 2004). These suggestions are associated with the researcher not being in the physical presence of participants and may be a cause of misinterpretations arising. It provided me with the opportunity to consider, and address in advance, some of the challenges that may hinder the research process.

From their experiences of administering online research, Morgan & Symon (2004) recommend that the benefits of the research be explained to the participants to encourage them to participate. They suggest that researchers develop a rapport with participants to motivate them to continue in their participation. Researchers must be friendly and use a language style similar to participants. They must create a discussion and carefully select words to utilise. It is necessary to be empathetic and word responses in a way that supports participants. Ensure participants that their responses will not be made public. Researchers should reply quickly, but be patient when awaiting participants' responses. Consider that they may be reflecting or busy. It is important to debrief and thank participants for their participation.

These studies suggest that cyberspace can be a valuable space to foster interactions and generate data in a more sophisticated way. However, conducting online research is complex. Therefore, researchers must consider the limitations of online spaces and take measures to minimise the adverse effects. Hence, taking into account some of the benefits and criticisms of conducting research utilising cyberspace, I also decided to incorporate a face-to-face method in this study, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Considering this literature, I created a group on Facebook for all participants to be part of the virtual group discussion by selecting the 'Closed group' option. I then proceeded to the privacy settings to select the 'Secret group' option, so that Facebook users who are not participants would not have access to see the membership, activity and posts in the group. In this way, I ensured the protection of participants' identities. However, owing to me recruiting participants from the same research location, the use of snowball sampling, and Facebook displaying some details about users, participants knew the identities of other members of the group (similar to traditional FGDs).

The group news feed allowed participants to see each other's posts and share their thoughts and views about cyber violence. I obtained written permission from the participants to have access to view their activity and interactions on the Facebook group that I created for the study, which enhanced the data generation process. While there were possibilities for participants to share information from the group with individuals who were not members, the code of ethics developed attempted to prohibit participants from doing so to protect their identities. I assured participants that I would not share the chats with anyone but would use the data for analysis and report-writing purposes, where others could not identify them due to the use of pseudonyms.

I designed a code of ethics for communication on the Facebook group (as mentioned earlier in the current chapter). While this was not meant to be prescriptive, highly regulatory or detract from the nature of the social medium that is Facebook, I intended for it to promote respect and some form of discipline and to avoid unpleasantness, uneasiness and violation of participants' rights. I would have informed participants who did not adhere to the rules developed on the Facebook group created that they had deviated from the rules agreed upon when I accepted them into the group. I would have then excluded the participant (a contact on the group) from the study.

Reading and reflecting upon the responses of participants in the interviews enhanced my understanding of teenage girls' experiences of cyber violence and prepared me for the group discussion. As per the Virtual Group Discussion Schedule (see Appendix 8), I posed seven questions, one at a time, and I allowed ample time for participants to reflect, respond and discuss. I phrased the questions in a short, simple, direct and non-ambiguous manner. I also posted pictures on the group (Figure 1) and utilised it to stimulate interactions by prompting and probing the members about their views and interpretations of them. Participants were

prohibited from sharing their own experiences of cyber violence or the experiences of others on the Facebook group, due to the sensitivity of experiences, to protect the identities of others and themselves, and to avoid issues related to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were allowed to share experiences (related to themselves or others) during individual face-to-face interviews (which I discussed in the previous section). The discussion on the group occurred on a day and at a time which was convenient and mutually agreed upon by the participants and myself, taking into account the daily schedules of learners, them attending school and my position as a teacher. I anticipated that the discussion would be approximately 45 minutes in length. However, it was also dependent on the length of time that participants took to respond, technical aspects and the nature of responses.

I requested participants to be online 10 minutes before the commencement of the discussion. I made a note of various observations during the discussion. I sent a greeting, and a welcome message on the group and participants responded with greetings (hi, hello, hey everyone) and emoticons (smiley face, high-five, wave) as they entered the group. When all participants were online, I reminded them about the rules for conduct during the discussion. Initially, I did have concerns about participants being online and not taking part. However, as the discussion progressed, I noticed that all participants were active. A few participants experienced technical problems such as devices 'freezing', messages not being delivered (hence they did not answer certain questions) and their slow typing speed, while other participants typed very fast. It was difficult for me to communicate with participants, or for them to communicate with me when they experienced technical difficulties during the group discussion if they were utilising only one device to interact. Hence, I exercised patience and awaited the responses of participants. I responded quickly but provided participants time to reflect then respond. It was also vital for me to consider that while I scheduled the group discussion to take place, participants may have also been engaged with other activities simultaneously, such as eating, drinking, and watching television.

While Davis et al., (2004) cautioned that responses do not always follow the sequence of questions, this was not a challenge experienced during the group discussion, as participants went directly to the question and responded to it or commented on the posts made by other participants. Hence, this did not impact the flow of the discussion. Some participants utilised emoticons, but this did not negatively affect the data or my understanding of it. The use of acronyms or 'chat language' by participants was minimal. Since I possess knowledge of chat

language, I was able to understand what was being said, despite initially planning to approach participants to type it out in full if I was unsure about what the participant meant.

During the discussion, participants were cordial and respectful towards each other, but to some extent, they were guarded about what they said compared to in the individual interviews. Online, they were cautious and not as robust as they were offline. It may be due to the presence of other members of the Facebook group. My presence as a researcher was not overwhelming, as I posed the questions and allowed participants to interact with each other and respond, instead of controlling the discussion.

There was no evidence of participants discussing irrelevant matters on the group instead of furthering the discussion. The discussion was 45 minutes in length. At the end of the discussion, I thanked all the participants for their time. I requested them to continue sharing relevant information about the topic, by in-boxing me, communicating on the group, or in person. I also extended my good wishes to them for the rest of the school year and cautioned them about the impact of misusing cyberspace. Participants 'liked' the post and expressed their gratitude to me for the airtime issued to them for mobile data. Participants shared images on the group that created awareness of cyber violence. I did not shut the group or remove the participants from the group, in case the need for further information arose. Before and after the group discussion, I observed that many of the participants invited other participants from the group (not people who were not part of the study) onto their personal Facebook accounts. It suggests that their engagement within the research processes facilitated opportunities for the creation of new friendships. During the discussion on Facebook, I copied and pasted the data onto a Microsoft Word document to formulate a transcript, despite the communication on Facebook being accessible for specific periods.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics are an essential aspect of all research. In a keynote presentation at an annual meeting related to sustainability and education policy, Holz (2014) advocated that:

> "….we need to put human life before economic growth; mother earth before corporate success; people before profit, because that is what is necessary for people's survival in our children and grandchildren's generations."

This was especially important to ensure that I did not cause harm to the participants.

Dooly, Moore & Vallejo (2017) state that the anonymity of participants and institutions (use of pseudonyms), autonomy and attaining written consent of voluntary participants or their parents in the case of minors are essential ethical considerations. Researchers must also ensure privacy and confidentiality, grant participants the right to opt-out of participating, disclose anticipated risks and gather data for the study concerned, not for any other purposes (Dooly, Moore & Vallejo, 2017). Wiersma & Jurs (2009) highlight that it is compulsory to obtain written permission from the gatekeeper/s of the research site before the commencement of the research study. I submitted a formal application to the Ethics Committee of the University of KZN for permission to conduct the study (Appendix 1). The protocol reference number is HSS/0206/017D. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) state that informed consent is a decision taken to participate in a particular activity after the researcher provides information related to the purpose and processes of the study to the participants. I issued consent forms and information letters to the school principal, parents of the participants, and the chairperson of the school governing body, to inform them about the aims, nature and process of the study (Appendices 2, 3 and 6), as a researcher must seek approval from institutions (Tuck & Mckenzie, 2015). I also sought authorisation in the form of written permission from the participants (Appendix 5).

Research in cyberspace raises several ethical concerns, especially about anonymity and confidentiality, which I considered. Hallett & Barber (2014, p.324) found that "online research brings unique ethical dilemmas, including issues of privacy in semi-private spaces (e.g., Facebook), gaining consent from distant people, [the] intention of online participation, and anonymity." Hence, it was essential to take into account the necessary ethical considerations, which I address below.

I only invited participants onto the Facebook group after they provided written consent to me. It ensured that specific people who were invited and were interested in participating joined. All participants were recruited from the selected school and not via Facebook owing to issues of privacy. I designed the study methods in ways that anticipate minimal risk to the participants. No outside participants were allowed onto the Facebook group created specifically for the study, other than the participants selected. The assumption was that participants were familiar with cyberspace and its usage, and the study takes into account aspects of cyber safety. Hence, I envisaged that it would raise awareness about safety and risk in cyberspace. Nevertheless,

keeping in mind the focus of the study and its aims, I did not want to take risks and assume that all participants possessed sufficient awareness about safe and acceptable online conduct.

I designed a draft code of ethics (see below) to manage communication on the Facebook group pleasantly and respectfully. I discussed these with all the participants. Participants were not allowed to mention the experiences of others on the Facebook group or bring them into discussion, especially those who were not on the Facebook group. While participants were aware of the identities of the other participants (as in the case of traditional FGDs), they were discouraged from sharing such information or data with others who were not participants to protect their identities. I prohibited the use of profanity, sexist, racist or any other discriminatory comments.

I cautioned participants about spending too much time on the Facebook group and neglecting their school work or household chores. The group was not to serve as a petition for issues. It was a discussion forum. Participants were not permitted to allow others to participate in the data generation process on their behalf. While I could not predict whether or not they would go against this rule, I cautioned them against it. Before the data generation began, participants committed to the rules for conduct on the Facebook group. I informed the participants that they could develop the code of ethics for conduct on the Facebook group further, or amend it with their input and then post it on the Facebook group.

I also informed the participants that I was not conducting the study to identify perpetrators of cyber violence or to punish them, but rather to explore teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. Should participant/s have violated the rules on the group, I decided that I would inform them that they had broken the rules and could no longer participate in the study. Their contacts details would have been removed (using the delete contact setting) from the Facebook group. Fortunately, such a situation did not arise.

At the start of the discussion, I informed the participants that taking part was voluntary and that their identities would be kept anonymous in the written report. I advised each participant that she was allowed to refuse to answer questions that made her feel uncomfortable, was free to withdraw at any time, and I would not utilise the data related to the participant. I stored the transcripts on my computer using password protection. I sought written consent from the school counsellor (who has a Bachelor of Arts Qualification: Health Sciences and Social Services,

with a specialisation in Psychological Counselling). I requested her to provide psychosocial support for the participants who may have become emotionally disturbed by the experiences narrated during the face-to-face interviews. I asked the participants to inform me if they required assistance from the available counsellor. The counsellor and I were to agree upon her remuneration mutually, and I would pay for her services, as the school would not be responsible for payment for private purposes such as this study. None of the participants stated that they required counselling. In creating and presenting the transcript of the virtual group discussion data for analysis, the real names of the participants were replaced with their pseudonyms to protect their identities. All the individual face-to-face interview transcription sheets also contained pseudonyms, which I used in writing up the research report to protect the identity of the participants.

If the participant/s revealed extremely sensitive information that was detrimental to her or others, I made a decision not to disclose such information in the transcriptions, analysis and findings of my study. I informed the participants that I would not share information related to the data generated with their teachers, friends or family members. I assured the participants and gatekeepers in writing that I would utilise the findings of the research conducted to write a PhD dissertation and any further research outputs.

I locked the signed consent forms and printed copies of the transcripts in a personal safe. I informed all stakeholders concerned that the data generated would be sent for storage at the university for five years. I would incinerate the audio recordings of data and shred and dispose of the printed transcripts. The Facebook group created will be closed after examination of the dissertation has been completed.

4.10 Rigour in qualitative research towards achieving trustworthiness

This section discusses aspects related to the rigour of this research. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) state that for research to be valid, it should reveal similar results when replicated. However, this is not entirely possible in qualitative research, especially considering that complex factors such as human emotions and other circumstances influence the sensitive nature of certain studies. Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba (2007) state that qualitative researchers consider credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability towards the achievement of trustworthiness in ensuring the rigour of the study. According to Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2005, p.145), in qualitative research, rigour "relates to the credibility of the findings". Macnee

& McCabe (2008) define credibility as placing confidence in the findings of the research. These comments reflect the similar ways of perceiving rigour.

During this study, I dealt with aspects related to credibility in various ways. Writing in a reflexive journal contributes towards the credibility of a study (Anney, 2014). I regularly recorded information about the various processes as they occurred and my experiences of them as Anney (2014) expounds that researchers can establish dependability by utilising an audit trail. Koch (2006) states that researchers can achieve confirmability by utilising a reflexive journal. Therefore, by keeping a reflexive journal, credibility, dependability and confirmability were achieved.

I arranged for the member checking process to achieve credibility, owing to its importance in eliminating researcher bias when analysing and interpreting results (Anney, 2014). My research supervisor checked the data generation instruments (Individual face-to-face interview schedule and Virtual Group Discussion Schedule) for ambiguity. I conducted a mock discussion on the Facebook group and an individual face-to-face interview to ensure accuracy in interviewing techniques, as Anney (2014) advises that researchers can seek credibility by ensuring sound interview techniques.

I saved the data from the Facebook group electronically and also created a transcript then printed it. I audio-recorded individual interviews, transcribed it, then printed the transcripts. I advised the participants to seek clarity regarding the questions that they experienced difficulty in understanding and to respond confidently, without fear of judgement or scrutiny. To avoid participants responding in ways that they believed I required of them, I did not want to select participants from the classes that I teach, as power relations may lead to them being afraid to speak to avoid being judged. However, there was interest from some learners in the classes that I teach, and I included them in the study. It was vital for me to acknowledge that my presence and position as a researcher and a teacher had the potential to influence participants' responses. Furthermore, I vowed to acknowledge and declare any biases that may have arisen and affected the data.

Bitsch (2005) defines dependability as "the stability of findings over time" (p.86). Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) state that dependability involves providing participants with the opportunity to evaluate the findings, interpretations and recommendations of the study to ensure that it supports the data generated. I took the face-to-face interview transcripts, the

virtual group discussion data transcript, and the analysis reports back to the participants timeously for review and reflection. Taking the transcribed, analysed and interpreted data back to the participants for evaluation is regarded as essential to allow them to suggest changes if they are not satisfied owing to misreporting that may occur (Schwandt et al., 2007).

The analysis of data was shared with my research supervisor to ensure that it was analysed appropriately and accurately. I also did presentations within the PhD cohort to gain feedback and improve upon the work where necessary. It was beneficial, and Pitney & Parker (2009) mention that the individuals approached will look at the background of the research, data generation methods, research process, management of the data, data transcripts, analysis and the findings. I made use of quotations from the interviews and the discussion to substantiate claims made in the research report as "researcher(s) are required to include the voices of respondents in the analysis and interpretation of the data" to achieve rigour (Anney, 2014, p.277). I included an anonymous transcript of one of the interviews in the research report (Appendix 9).

In terms of transferability, I provided detailed descriptions of the context and location of the study in the research report. I did this because "thick description involves the researcher elucidating all the research processes, from data collection, [the] context of the study to the production of the final report as this can assist other researchers in replicating the study in similar contexts" (Anney, 2014, p.278). Trustworthiness refers to the confidence or trust that one may have about a study and its findings (Robson, 2011). Therefore, I took these measures to achieve greater trustworthiness

4.11 Reflexivity: My positionality in this research

This research study explored teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence, and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. As demonstrated in this chapter, the study required me to undertake various processes to generate data. Furthermore, various factors influenced the research process, one of which is my role as a researcher in the development of the study.

Mahagan (2016) refers to the concepts of "insider" and "outsider" in her research. For example, she states that she did not experience cyberbullying or its effects, making her an outsider to the phenomenon. However, she can relate to the area of research, having particular experiences and observations as a feminist, in that way making her an insider and outsider in the context of

the study. I too believe that I am both an insider and outsider in this study. I am an insider in the sense that as a girl, like Mahagan (2016), I too was bullied. I am now a woman. I am employed at the research site and had personal and cyber interactions with the participants daily. I am also a feminist researcher studying teenage girls, having particular observations of the phenomenon of cyber violence. I can be regarded as an outsider, as I have not experienced cyber violence. Furthermore, I am an educator, and the participants are teenage learners who are frequently on Facebook, while I was still becoming familiar with using such spaces. I am researching a phenomenon wherein the participants are dominant and familiar in cyberspace, and I had to acquire particular skills to conduct the research effectively.

I am an Indian, Hindu, middle-class female in my late twenties. I was raised by strict disciplinarian parents who for several reasons, did not allow my siblings and I to own a mobile phone until we began to attend university. Nevertheless, this was followed by my parents, continually monitoring our usage of our mobile phones, highlighting a lack of heed paid to our privacy.

Being a school teacher (currently employed for six years) meant that I had to enforce the school rules on mobile phones, as there are common beliefs about mobile phones stirring trouble in school. Teaching the English language also meant that I had to play a role in encouraging learners to read books instead of continually texting, by painting mobile phones as fostering poor language abilities and sparking conflict at school. Most of the conflict at school associated with mobile phones and cyberspace concerned teenage girls. Such incidents led to me becoming curious about the processes concerned. Being a post-structural feminist researcher and driven to study issues affecting teenage girls, I intended to pursue a study related to teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them.

It impacted various aspects of my life on a personal, professional and academic level. It meant me catching up with the latest trends and venturing into the cyber world (more specifically creating a Facebook group) to understand the functioning and interactions in that space better. I also sought assistance, mostly from teenagers and some adults who provided technical advice and support. By no means did I encourage learners to be online continuously. Nevertheless, it did, to an extent, differ from my traditionally expected role. This in-depth reflection based on how my personal, professional and academic life intersect assists in contextualising this study. It also suggests how the interrelationship impacted it.

4.12 Data analysis

Adopting qualitative methods to generate data may result in large volumes of data emerging for analysis. Hence, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) deem it necessary for the researcher to deliberately select only data that are required and related to the research questions. Furthermore, they refer to this process as data reduction and advise that data reduction should be a consistent process throughout the study.

Once the interviews had been transcribed and validated by participants, I carefully read and familiarised myself with the interview and discussion transcripts. Utilising the various coloured highlighters on Microsoft Word, I coded and categorised data into units related to the research questions. To enable the initial analysis of data, I looked at the interview/discussion questions and classified them under the appropriate research question. I created three Microsoft Word documents. Each of the documents was for each research question, that is, one pertained to teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence, one related to their experiences of cyber violence and one was about the reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls. I then copied and pasted each interview or discussion question into one of the three documents. I copied the responses of each participant to each interview question from the interview/discussion transcript into one of the three Word documents. Using the copy and paste function on Microsoft Word was useful to select and move data and other features on the program such as highlighters and insertion of notes to label and code data.

I read through the data several times to identify emerging themes. I analysed the data using thematic analysis. Guest, Macqueen & Namey (2011, p.8) remark that researchers use thematic analysis in qualitative research. It is because there is a "focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes, codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis" (p.8). This method of analysis was useful to the current study as I adopted the qualitative approach and elicited rich textual data.

To assist me in the process of thematic analysis, I drew upon the process as outlined by Petty, Thomson & Stew (2012, p.4):

> "The researcher initially reads the data several times to gain familiarity with the text as a whole. Codes (labels) are given to sentences, phrases, paragraphs or lines. Codes are compared across the whole data set to identify variations, similarities, patterns and

> relationships. The researcher writes reflections and ideas related to sections of data to abstract from the data and deepen analysis (memo writing); testing out and expanding ideas. Codes are grouped to create a smaller number of themes that distil the key issues identified by the researcher. Relationships between themes are then identified to create a thematic map. This process is not a linear sequential process as it appears here; rather, analysis involves continual movement across these stages.

The intended strategy enabled me to identify crucial information from the data. This process was also useful in monitoring the data reduction process, ensuring that the three research questions were being answered adequately and keeping in mind the tentative order of the analysis. It also facilitated working more systematically as a researcher. Coding, categorising and reduction of data assisted me in identifying data that were relevant to the study and keeping aside irrelevant data. This is because there were possibilities that participants may have also discussed issues that are insignificant and not relevant to the focus of this study during the data generation process.

FPS can be useful in guiding analysis by paying close attention to how participants narrate their stories, the use of language and by interrogating the meaning contained in words (Aston, 2016) and participants in this study narrated in-depth experiences related to cyber violence. According to post-structuralists, multiple discourses give rise to subjectivity, which may also be unstable and contradictory (Gavey, 1989). Through generating data for this study, I recognised that participants presented multiple understandings and experiences which were very much subjective and contradictions were evident in the data. According to Weedon (1991), FPS encompasses a wide range of analysis methods, but the most crucial aspects focus on language, subjectivity and meaning. Thematic analysis is compatible with FPS in the sense that it focusses on recognising both explicit and implicit ideas contained in the data, which researchers may use to develop themes. It also requires one to pay careful attention to the data (sentences, phrases and other aspects) and use them to make comparisons across the entire data set.

I did not discard data that I did not utilise in the analysis chapters of this dissertation, but kept it aside, should there be publications which emerge from the data. I planned to analyse data by working with one research question document at a time. I did not intend to isolate data but to ensure that I captured the relevant data in the analysis and logical order. This process assisted in avoiding confusion or being disorganised, feeling overwhelmed or unintentionally omitting

relevant data. I preferred to utilise strategies that I was familiar and comfortable with to code, categorise and analyse the data. The order of the analysis chapters was tentative until I understood how the various parts fit together logically. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) describe data analysis as an inductive process to organise the available data into categories for interpretation. As patterns emerge, researchers can compare and examine the data to identify emerging themes and draw conclusions. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) point out that during data analysis it is imperative and beneficial to continually reflect on the research questions to organise, analyse and interpret the data accurately, competently and logically. I took into account all of these points to ensure that data is analysed rigorously and answers the research questions adequately.

4.13 Research challenges

This study researched teenage girls, and while the literature demonstrates that cyber violence mainly affects teenage girls, it also affects teenage boys and children. The sample size utilised for this study does not represent the broader South African context, despite inviting girls of all races to participate. Being a teacher and a researcher may have shaped the responses and conduct of the participants.

There were various challenges that I envisaged would have the possibility to hamper the progress of the study. To assist me in dealing with the challenges I faced during the study, I read recent studies that researchers conducted about issues related to teenagers in cyberspace to gain insight into the challenges those researchers faced. In the case of my study, while the school principal and the school governing body provided written consent, the sensitive nature of the study may have led participants to exercise their right to withdraw from it. I prepared myself for this challenge by increasing my initial sample size of 20 by ten girls, which proved to be a sound decision considering some of the events that occurred after that.

One of the prospective participants (under the age of 18) was very enthusiastic about participating. However, I could not include her in the study due to her parents being unaware of her having a Facebook account and issues related to parental consent. Five participants did not turn up for the interview despite being at school and, when I approached them, they requested me to postpone it, owing to personal reasons. I rescheduled with their consent and conducted the interviews with them. Two of the participants were ill and absent from school during the week that I scheduled their interviews; they contacted me and stated that they would

contact me when they had recovered, to reschedule the interview. Within a few days, they had recovered and turned up for their interview. Two of the participants requested that their interviews be conducted at 07h00 (before the school day) owing to one's transport arriving at school early and the other having a family function that week and not being available during the day for the rest of the week.

Two of the participants' parents grounded them for deviant behaviour during the data generation period. One of the parents withheld the participant's mobile phone and stated that he (the father) consented to the child participating and would return the phone before the group discussion, provided that the participant improved her behaviour. Fortunately, the parents resolved the situation within the household, and the participant was able to take part. Unfortunately, the second parent, when contacted, apologised for the inconvenience caused but was not willing to allow the participant to take part, as she was frequently disobeying rules she ought to obey. The participant expressed a great deal of disappointment, as this negatively affected her opportunity to participate and to receive the airtime incentive.

After the sampling process, but before the data generation, two participants who were selected to take part in this study perpetrated cyber violence against another individual who was also selected to participate. It became a legal matter, but eventually the victim, for personal reasons, dropped the charges against the perpetrators, who admitted to inflicting harm on her. The perpetrators were instructed by the school principal to apologise to the victim at the school assembly. The victim and perpetrators did not want to be removed from the study, due to the conclusion of the case. Hence, I included all three in the study.

Four participants who had taken consent forms returned a few days later to state that they did not want to participate as they were apprehensive that I would monitor their Facebook accounts. This was despite me clarifying that this was not going to be the case and allowing them an opportunity to peruse the interview schedule. One participant decided to take part while the other three maintained their choice. I thanked them for their time and did not pursue them any further. Nevertheless, these occurrences did not negatively affect the study sample size as I managed to recruit more participants in place of those who were no longer part of the study. It is evident that various challenges arise during the sampling and data generation process. It is essential to be reasonable, allow for flexibility where required, exercise patience and caution, take into account ethical considerations, plan for challenges that may arise and most importantly, display an attitude of perseverance.

The challenge of participants becoming nervous or scared to respond during the face-to-face interviews, and the virtual group discussion may have arisen. Hence, snowball sampling was useful by including the friends of participants in the study, which may have facilitated ease and comfort as the discussions were occurring. I assured the participants that they would remain invisible to outsiders, as the Facebook group is not accessible to those who are not members.

Owing to problems with teenagers spending too much time utilising their mobile phones and neglecting their schoolwork and household chores, I scheduled a specific time that I would be involved in data generation and prearranged the date and time with the participants. I did not schedule data generation during extended periods on weekdays, as participants would be doing their homework, preparing for examinations, attending extramural activities or busy with family responsibilities. There were possibilities for participants to be online but not participate and I attempted to deal with this challenge by reminding participants about the group discussion time, the importance of their participation and the incentive of airtime to encourage them to take part.

Globally, there is limited literature about teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them. I drew on the literature that is available about the topic, such as the impact of cyber violence, to motivate why I should conduct this study. I also stated that there is limited research in this area, and my study will add to the body of knowledge. I was aware that I researched the phenomenon of cyber violence using a method that was not familiar to me initially. I continued to source and read about studies conducted in cyberspace. I did this to help me in the setting up and administration of the Facebook group and methods to generate data effectively.

Challenges related to the setup and administration of the Facebook group and data generation on the group may have arisen. I recruited the assistance of an IT technician, from whom I planned to seek advice if necessary. There were challenges experienced with electronic devices during the discussion, and I had to exercise patience and await the responses of participants.

4.14 Conclusion

In this chapter, I detailed the research paradigm, design and research approach. I discussed the research location, context and sampling. I explored in detail the data generation methods, research process and motivation for particular methodological choices. I then focussed on ethical considerations, rigour and researcher reflexivity. I explained how I analysed the data

and the challenges that I faced during this study. The next three chapters focus on the presentation and analysis of data that I generated during the research process.

Chapter Five: Teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the research approach and methods. I present and analyse the data according to the three research questions in three chapters. This is the first of the three analysis chapters. It focusses on teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence (research question 1). The analysis commences with more description and then progressively deepens in subsequent chapters because the first research question focusses more on a descriptive aspect compared to the second and third research questions, which have more depth. However, there is considerable overlap in the data, and therefore, the themes are not mutually exclusive. I analyse data generated within individual face-to-face interviews (denoted by II) and the virtual group discussion (indicated by VGD). Participants did not just speak about themselves but spoke about teenage girls in general since I posed the questions about teenage girls.

I present and analyse teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence, within the following themes which emerged from the data:

- **Cyber violence is damaging.**
- **Cyber violence has numerous forms with differing degrees.**
- **Identities in cyberspace are complex.**
    - **Cyber violence: Not just stranger danger.**
    - **Gendered identities of perpetrators and victims.**
- **Cyber violence and physical violence are related.**

5.2 Cyber violence is damaging

While it is obvious that cyber violence is a form of violation that should be avoided and prevented, this theme discusses teenage girls' broad understandings about its harmful nature. I explore deeper understandings of the nature and extent of cyber violence in subsequent themes.

When I asked the participants about their understandings of cyber violence, there were similarities in their responses regarding the damaging nature of cyber violence:

> **Kim:** When a person uses a technological platform such as social media to degrade or attack another person. (VGD)

> **Niharika**: It is behaving aggressively in cyberspace and hurting people's feelings. (II)

Many participants understood cyber violence to involve the use of technological devices and mediums to create hostility and harm others, causing distress to victims. It points to their understanding of the detrimental nature of the phenomenon. Hence, this disrupts and destabilises notions that cyberspace is solely a positive space but also a space which is misused. Similarly, in several other studies, participants also reported that perpetrators make use of technology to attack victims (Menesini et al., 2012; Holfeld & Leadbeater, 2015; Schneider et al., 2012; Dempsey et al., 2009). Koskela (2004) and White (2003) express that constraint of agency occurs when something threatens the ability of a person to participate in circulating their identities online actively. Aggressive behaviour and degradation may constrain the agency of victims, making it difficult for them to interact safely online.

All participants agreed that cyber violence has negative consequences for victims. For example, in the virtual group discussion participants stated:

> **Asanda:** It is a complete waste of energy invested into making someone feel uncomfortable on social media. (VGD)
>
> **Minenhle:** Cyber violence is awful. It makes you feel unsafe, and you will not feel comfortable anymore. (VGD)

These participants' comments reflect an awareness that cyber violence causes victims to feel apprehensive and insecure and also demonstrates these participants' opposition to such socially unacceptable practices. Minenhle uses the word "anymore" which suggests that cyber violence experiences distort one's previous perceptions of it. Due to the discomfort that cyber violence causes, it may corrode online users' confidence in cyberspace and result in them being reluctant to interact online. It may also then deprive them of their rights to interact in cyberspace.

The findings above are similar to studies by Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith (2013), and Shultz, Heilman & Hart (2014), where participants held objections to violent acts online due to their harsh impact. However, findings from the current research differ from studies done by Tarapdar & Kellett (2011) and Baker & Helm (2010) where young people accepted cyber violence. It reflects conflicting findings about understandings of cyber violence. Nevertheless, when I prompted participants in the current study about their experiences of cyber violence, some narratives suggest that participants view cyber violence as a necessary means of defending and protecting themselves. It indicates that despite the adverse effects of cyber violence, it is not

homogenously opposed and classified as unfavourable, but young people sometimes view it as necessary.

There was evidence of participants in the current study understanding cyber violence to be a prominent issue amongst teenagers, but feeling that other teenagers do not recognise its severity:

> **Manuela:** It is bad what teenagers go through. My friends do not take it seriously; they think it is best to ignore what you see when it comes to cyber violence. (II)

> **Akira:** Some teenagers view cyber violence as small and not important, but it is a huge issue. (II)

From their experiences online, these participants were amongst those who understood that cyber violence is a significant issue which mainly affects teenagers adversely, depicting their recognition of a problem that is concerning to them and their opposition to it. However, participants felt that other teenagers, such as their friends, trivialise cyber violence, showing a lack of concern about such risks, which exacerbates matters. It also suggests that teenagers' understandings about cyber violence are not uniform. Findings related to the participants in the current study contradict those of Marwick & Boyd (2011); Cassidy, Jackson & Brown (2009); Talwar, Gomez-Garibello & Shariff (2014). In their studies, young people trivialised cyber violence, which is possible because of the researchers conducting those studies in contexts different from that in South Africa. Drawing on aspects of FPS that enable us to identify how people negotiate their personal beliefs, values and practices concerning those contained in social discourses (Aston, 2016), it is evident that cyber violence is not necessarily viewed in the same way by all. It is important to take into account the different ways that teenagers are socialised, their varying experiences in cyberspace and their constructions of violence.

Many participants regarded cyber violence as ruining the reputations of victims:

> **Sofia:** People say bad things about girls on social media, and they defame their character. (II)

By using the word "people", Sofia suggests that it is not particularly boys or girls but people in general, who police girls online. According to participants, cyber violence entails exposing compromising information about girls. The source of information, along with the perpetrator

who posted or circulated it may be challenging to trace owing to the nuanced features of online spaces like anonymity and fake profiles. It shows a gendered impact, whereby there are expectations for girls to guard their reputations and deal with harmful exposure linked to online posts. Ruining girls' reputations causes them humiliation, especially since the cyber audience is massive. Hence, participants' understandings of cyber violence demonstrate their awareness of a phenomenon that is destructive to one's image. It is a concern as the construction of identities are especially important to teenagers, and it is not easy to reverse such damage.

Several participants characterised cyber violence as a process that impacts the self-esteem of victims. For example:

> **Pooja:** To me, it [cyber violence] means to abuse social media to make victims feel low about themselves. (VGD)

There was awareness of perpetrators misusing the evolved features of social media to target victims and lower their self-esteem. Furthermore, it can have harsh short and long-term consequences, especially for those victims who have inferiority complexes about themselves. It suggests that perpetrators attempt to regulate the attitudes of victims towards themselves in ways that cause them to internalise negative opinions about themselves. Similarly, Oduaran & Okorie (2016) and Vandoninck, d'Haenens & Roe (2013) are amongst researchers who found that cyber violence had a damaging impact on the self-esteem of victims, which is a cause for concern. The fact that Pooja uses the word "abuse" suggests that she recognises that cyber violence is a socially unacceptable practice and rejects such harmful notions.

When I prompted the participants about the emotions that cyber violence evokes in them, all the participants in the group discussion maintained that cyber violence is distressing:

> **Zandile:** I feel really sad, and I would not like cyber violence to happen to anyone. I feel emotionally stressed. (VGD)
>
> **Londeka:** Anger and mistrust towards the perpetrator. (VGD)
>
> **Asanda:** Disgust at the sick people [perpetrators] in the world. (VGD)
>
> **Kaylee:** I feel angry and worried about the things going on in this world. It hurts my feelings and makes me feel sad for those people who are going through this. (VGD)

Zinhle: I feel scared, sad and very depressed. (VGD)

These responses depict participants' understandings and awareness that cyber violence is associated with undesirable consequences. It evokes feelings of sadness, anger, distrust, revulsion, concern and fear, and leads to them feeling emotionally burdened. This highlights that cyber violence evokes negative emotions within teenage girls, even in cases where the violence is inflicted upon others, depicting how violence affects not only victims but also those exposed to it. In light of such outcomes, participants rejected violent behaviour. The current study reflects several consequences associated with cyber violence. In their respective studies done; researchers recognised that cyber violence creates consequences such as sadness (Fenaughty & Harre, 2013), mistrusting the perpetrator (Lewis, Rowe, & Wiper, 2017) and fear (Henson, Reyns, & Fisher, 2013; Pereira & Matos, 2015).

While Asanda expressed disgust at people who are responsible for cyber violence, insinuating her holding perpetrators of cyber violence accountable, in research done by Livingstone et al., (2014) in Europe amongst 9-16-year-olds, their participants voiced their disgust at the violent content online. It removes the accountability of perpetrators for their actions by casting blame onto cyberspace. However, all social media applications have disclaimers which protect itself from being held accountable for negative occurrences and therefore mean that online users are responsible for their safety online.

This theme explored teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence as damaging because it fosters aggression, abuse, shame and anxiety. Teenage girls in this study also understood cyber violence to be damaging in the sense that it can ruin reputations, lower self-esteem and evoke negative emotions. The theme that follows focusses on participants' understandings of the numerous forms of cyber violence that exist.

5.3 Cyber violence has numerous forms with differing degrees

Participants provided varied responses to a question about the types of violence that occur online. They spoke about the use of profanity and inappropriate images:

Sasha: People send rude pics or use vulgar language on social media, things that teenagers do not want to see. (II)

Sasha, for example, asserted that people conduct themselves inappropriately by swearing or sending inappropriate content. It places people online in uncomfortable situations. Her comment is evidence of generalising that other teenagers are also against the posting of harmful online content which may not necessarily be the case. Due to teenagers interacting widely in cyberspace, particular age restrictions regarding certain harmful content get abandoned, exposing teenagers to negative emotional and psychological consequences. It also suggests that while cyberspace is nuanced, there is a bypassing of filtering software and safety mechanisms.

Participants in this study regarded inappropriate circulation of material as socially unacceptable, showing evidence of contempt for it. Comparatively, participants in Tarapdar & Kellett's (2011) study amongst 1512 youth aged 12-16 years viewed negative use and distribution of images or videos of a person as acceptable, and they downplayed its impact. Hence, there are different opinions regarding cyber violence, possibly due to different social contexts, so it is crucial to move away from notions that homogenise beliefs about it.

Offensive content also includes technologically modified content:

> **Tia:** It is bad. Teenagers often send videos which have been tampered with, nude pics, also creating memes out of people. (II)

The features of cyberspace allow for users to override security measures and tamper with content. Several participants in this study mentioned that it is a common practice amongst teenagers to create or manipulate pictures and videos of others and circulate them, possibly due to notoriety or vengefulness. It results in victims having their privacy invaded, and feeling ashamed and distressed, especially where images of a sexual nature are concerned. Hence, here as well, there is evidence of discontentment towards harmful content online. In response to such findings, I draw upon a comment made by Matsui (2015) who maintains that it is a difficult task to remove such content which people upload, which also lends itself to being saved, copied and circulated. This causes undesirable consequences, especially considering that the cyber audience is enormous.

Participants recognised that invasion of privacy occurred online:

> **Pooja:** Sending private conversations you have with people to others is something we should not do, and it is not good to say bad things to others to make ourselves feel better. (II)

> **Akira:** When a picture you sent to someone goes viral then many people use bad words against you and so forth. People insult you on social media, and they do not see your side of the story, they judge you. (II)

Participants did not approve of practices that make private content public online, showing again, evidence of them challenging socially unacceptable conduct. Circulating private conversations and images serve to invade one's privacy and create a negative impression of the person. It leads to victims being misjudged, shamed and experiencing discomfort. Pooja suggests that perpetrators undermine others to elevate their social status, which is necessary to consider in light of social reputations being important to young people.

Zeng, Deng, Wang & Liu (2016) state that cyber services offer a variety of features to mobile users, such as conveniently and promptly sending videos, texts and images to recipients. However, it is those features of cyberspace that are also misused to violate victims, taking into account the widespread nature of technology. Hence, the benefits and dangers of technology must be taken into account when studying the destructive impact of online content as risks related to privacy (Allen, 2000; Shade, 2008) and reputation (Allen, 2000; Shariff & Johnny, 2007) contribute to the constraint of one's agency.

Some participants felt that cyberspace compromises their safety:

> **Asanda:** It [cyberspace] allows the public to access information on your life, which is a security risk. (VGD)

Cyber mechanisms allow for greater exposure of information. It permits people to access others' personal information and has the potential to instil fear in people. Hence, while cyberspace is undoubtedly a technologically advanced space to interact on, the nuanced features of cyberspace allow for access to others and exposure of information which perpetrators use to violate people. It has a 'double-edged sword' effect.

Many participants demonstrated an awareness that things may not always be as they seem. For example, people can use fake profiles:

> **Tia:** It is dangerous because people create fake profiles and predators want to bully us. (VGD)

> **Kristine:** People create fake profiles, pretending to be someone else, and their obsessive behaviour towards girls is noticed. (II)

Participants understood that the creation of fake accounts and masquerading create danger. Perpetrators engage in illegal and coercive practices under fake identities, which make it difficult for victims to identify them. It depicts how the features of cyberspace permit practices which threaten girls' safety and upholds socially unacceptable practices like masquerading and bullying. In cases where perpetrators create fake identities and engage in unpleasant activities, victims become confused, get blamed for crimes they did not commit and even experience harm to their reputations. Overall, the participants were aware that teenage girls are vulnerable to being violated through the creation of fake profiles by male and female cyberspace users as they use the word "people" which shows its gendered nature. These findings depict that participants were aware of how risks prevail in cyberspace and expose them to harm. The literature also points out issues related to fake identities causing problems online (Lazarinis, 2009; Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009).

However, while the participants in my study declared that other people create fake accounts and engage in masquerading, in En Kwan & Skoric's (2013) Singapore-based study amongst 1676 participants aged 13-17 years, participants admitted to engaging in masquerading to conceal their real identities. This also suggests that in particular settings, there is an understanding of what is socially unacceptable, but this is insufficient in preventing such actions. In light of these findings about identities, I take into account a characteristic of FPS regarding identities not being fixed but instead shifting due to power (Kondo, 1990). It results in different types of identities prevailing online, which users can create using cyber applications.

Several participants noted that online denigration of especially girls is a form of cyber violence that prevails for different reasons:

> **Lisa:** Perpetrators post negative comments with the photo. It is harmful. It discriminates someone's characteristics, and gender, especially girls, are discriminated. (II)

> **Manuela:** Some people use social media to make girls feel useless and ashamed for being themselves. (II)

These participants were amongst those who stated that girls are disparaged regarding their physical appearances and gender, contributing to humiliation online. Online denigration stems from social norms where boys and men are accepted irrespective of their physical appearances. At the same time, there is an objectification of girls' bodies, and there are expectations for girls to look a certain way or face attack. Therefore, girls' vulnerability to cyber violence entrenches gender inequalities. Perpetrators intending to create a negative perception of girls lead to possibilities for damage to the self-image and reputation of girls, considering that self-image is important to teenagers in terms of constructing their identities. Participants in the current study mentioned that victims face cyber violence due to others' negative perceptions of them. However, participants in Landstedt & Persson's (2014) research amongst 1214 participants aged 13-16 years in Sweden contended that those who possessed a poor image of themselves faced increased probabilities of being violated online and offline. It is possible because their participants included both boys and girls and a younger age group than those who took part in the current study.

Cyber gossip was a frequently identified form of violence:

> **Zinhle:** Teenage boys and girls gossip. They open up pages and write stuff about you, spoil your reputation and spread rumours about you. (II)

Many of the teenage girls in the study mentioned that gossiping occurred through the use of particular features on social media, such as creating pages against victims. It depicts the advanced and publicised nature of gossip in online spaces which harms a victim's image, and as mentioned previously, image constructions are significant to teenagers. These findings reflect that teenagers perpetrate cyber violence. It is not a surprising finding considering that teenagers spend vast amounts of time online.

While studies discovered cyber gossip as a form of violence that is perpetrated by girls (Thompson, 2016; Miliford, 2013), the findings above show that boys and girls engage in cyber gossip. It challenges traditionally held gender stereotypes. However, in light of social norms related to gender, it may be inferred that boys and girls gossip about different topics. This difference is possible due to them studying participants who are younger than the participants in the current study (as in Thompson's research) or older (as in Miliford's study). However, participants in my study did not narrate any experiences related to boys engaging in cyber gossip, indicating that their understandings sometimes differ from their experiences.

Numerous participants spoke about coercive forms of violence that prevail online:

> **Asanda:** People constantly in-box and harass you. (II)
>
> **Sasha:** People threaten others to do bad things that they do not want to do online or bribe them to do it. (VGD)
>
> **Londeka:** When you are original, people hate you more, they (teenagers) want you to be like them. They blackmail also. (II)

Participants mentioned that perpetrators adopt forceful methods of violence such as constant communication, bribery and blackmail online, depicting the intimidating and persistent nature of certain forms of cyber violence. It places victims in perplexing situations where there are particular demands made of them. Where victims decline the demands of perpetrators, they may face severe backlash. Londeka's comment shows that teenagers see uniqueness as being a bad thing which they contest and may also demand that such individuals conform to the accepted norms. It is also possible that some teenagers are envious of those teenagers who display their distinctiveness, so they violate them.

According to many participants, boys perpetrate sexual forms of violence against girls online:

> **Tyra-Lee:** Boys force girls online to do things you do not want to, like send nude pics. (II)

Boys denigrate girls as shown earlier, and they also force girls to send material of a sexual nature due to them wielding power in online spaces. Boys coercing girls to post pornographic material are linked to socially constructed gender norms related to male entitlement. There is evidence of disapproval from girls, as suggested by the words "to do things you do not want to." However, girls accede to boys' demands due to them trusting boys and also placing value on notions of love and romance and not wanting to lose an opportunity with a boy. If perpetrators circulate these materials, girls face risks of being shamed. This highlights the privileging of boys in a gendered order which sexualises and subordinates girls. Research by Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith (2013) and Lippman & Campbell (2014) also indicated that boys coerce girls to send sexts, portraying girls as victims of sexual violation online. Using FPS, I interrogate boundaries that are coercive and compel people to conform to particular

norms (Carey et al., 2017), as in the case above, where girls face sexual coercion as a result of gender norms in society.

Some participants felt that sexual harassment from strangers was challenging to deal with:

> **Faith:** Sometimes, I get messages from boys that I do not know. They say they like the way I look and they like me, it gets out of control. They say perverted things and my parents even see it. So my dad asks me about it, and I say I do not know. (II)

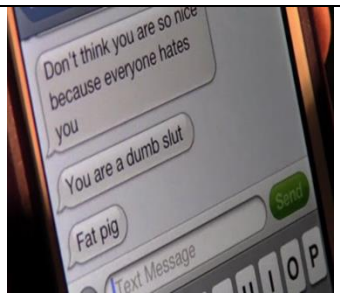
It is recognisable here that girls' physical appearances influence boys' "like" for girls and therefore places pressure on girls to look or dress in specific ways. Faith felt overwhelmed in response to online sexual harassment and being objectified, showing her vulnerability to sexual violation. The fact that the boys send these messages in spaces where it gets exposed to others reflects its explicit rather than implicit nature and that boys do not necessarily feel inhibited online. It is also apparent that she had to deal with her father's suspicions and surveillance of her as if she was responsible for instigating what was occurring. This illustrates that people (even family members) blame girls for sexual misconduct against them, in that way perpetuating harm against girls and sustaining gendered roles and performances. These findings clarify findings by Ringrose et al., (2013); Tanenbaum (2015), Weiss (2010), and Chisala-Tempelhoff & Kirya (2016) who found that girls were regarded as responsible for being sexually violated online. It normalises and reinforces violent attitudes towards girls, creating dangerous consequences for them. In light of girls' receiving blame for boys' sexualisation of them, I draw upon FPS which contests victim-blaming and advocates that people look at situations in a different way (Aston, 2016) such as by challenging biases and acknowledging perpetrators' actions. In Chapter Six, I present and analyse similar issues that Faith narrated.

To further ascertain teenage girls' understandings of the different degrees of forms of cyber violence, all the participants were provided with an opportunity to view images related to cyber violence (Figure 1 on the next page), asked to select an image which fit a given criterion and to justify their responses. The given criteria were as follows:

- An image that participants understood to be cyber violence.
- An image that participants regarded as the most common type of cyber violence that teenage girls experience.
- An image that reflects the worst form of cyber violence that a teenage girl can experience.

Referring to the forms of cyber violence in the discussion before this and the discussion in the section below is not to be repetitive but to focus on the multiple ways in which it features online and in different degrees, causing harm.

1



2

5

3

4

6

7

8

Figure 1. Images related to cyber violence that I showed to participants. I asked them to select an image which fit a given criterion and to justify their response. Source: Google Images

I first requested participants to select a picture which they understood to be cyber violence and then provide a reason for their choice. Participants selected different images which nevertheless pointed to name-calling online:

> **Niharika:** Pic 2. It is emotionally abusing a girl due to name-calling in cyberspace. (VGD)

> **Londeka:** Pic 5. They are calling her crude names online and writing it for everyone to see. (VGD)

Participants' selection of images possibly relates to their particular experiences or observations online. These participants were amongst many participants who chose picture 2 or 5. They justified that the picture they selected was an example of cyber violence as it showed evidence of harms occurring on a cyber-platform when perpetrators intend to publicise negative messages about a victim by name-calling, showing its explicit nature. It can be demeaning, cause emotional distress, humiliate a girl and ruin her reputation due to the advanced features of cyberspace and its widespread nature. Against these findings, FPS is a useful tool in interrogating the meaning contained in words (Aston, 2016), such as the comments included in the text of pictures 2 and 5 (slut, fat, bimbo). These are derogatory terms used to refer to a girl, showing a lack of acceptance for the girl's physical appearance and her conduct.

When participants were requested to select a picture which depicts the most common type of cyber violence that teenage girls experience, most participants selected picture 2, which also depicted the issue of name-calling discussed above:

> **Akira:** Pic 2. A lot of boys and girls call girls names and insult them online. They (boys and girls) ALWAYS try to bring girls down. (VGD)

Several participants felt that insults and name-calling were frequent online and continual attempts of boys and girls to criticise and undermine girls. This reinforces the subordination of girls who possibly do not conform to particular norms expected of them. Hence, girls should not homogenously be classified as victims of male violence only, as girls also experience cyber violence perpetrated by girls. While this study focusses on teenage girls, and girls in this study stated that girls are victims of name-calling, girls also name-call boys. However, participants did not speak about this, which shows that there are particular silences about cyber violence within this sample of participants.

These findings are similar to results by Nordhal, Beran & Dittrick (2013); O'Dea & Campbell (2012), who found that boys and girls name-call online. However, the findings above differ from Thompson's (2016) study, where the researcher found that girls name-call girls online. Hence, it is glaring that there are conflicting findings related to name-calling and gender. While name-calling occurs online, it also has the potential to affect victims negatively offline by causing them to feel humiliated, inferior and distressed and is, therefore, a concern. FPS guided this study, and it addresses questions about the exercising of power and how social relations like gender may be transformed (Weedon, 1987). This should not only be applied to physical spaces but also in cyberspace where relations between boys and girls are strained, especially concerning particular forms of cyber violence. I present and analyse data related to name-calling, later in this theme, under another category.

In contrast, many participants expressed that picture 1 was the most common form of cyber violence against teenage girls:

> **Kaylee:** Pic 1 because it happens every single day in front of our faces, behind our backs and even on social media, boys and girls gossip. (VGD)

Despite focussing on cyber gossip in another theme before this, it also features in this theme due to this theme focussing on participants' understandings of cyber violence in relation to the visual stimuli provided to them. Participants regarded gossip as a regular phenomenon that transpires online and offline, signifying that violence in this form is ubiquitous. It possibly leaves victims feeling suffocated and with no escape. It also suggests that perpetrators of gossip engage in this type of violence covertly and overtly, showing that perpetrators make particular choices about how they violate others. While the picture referred to depicts girls as gossipers, Kaylee was one of the participants who maintained that boys and girls perpetrate gossip in cyberspace and physical spaces which challenges traditional gender stereotypes.

It, therefore, becomes evident that participants' understandings of the forms and degrees of cyber violence sometimes extended beyond what was depicted in the picture, possibly indicating the influence of their socialisations on their responses. The data above represents gossip as a form of violence that boys and girls perpetrate in cyberspace and physical spaces, which is not a common finding.

In comparison, the literature shows that it is girls that gossip online and offline. For example, Forlum (2015) identified gossip in physical spaces as a girl-on-girl form of violence and studies recognised cyber gossip as a form of violence that girls perpetrate (Thompson, 2016; Miliford, 2013). It reflects gender biases which perpetuate particular social norms by constructing gossip as a feminised activity.

Comparatively, a few participants felt that picture 4 is a common form of cyber violence perpetrated against teenage girls:

> **Sasha:** Pic 4, many girls end up dying because of stalkers. (VGD)

> **Asanda:** Pic 4, girls are threatened and stalked by unknown people. (VGD)

These participants were amongst those who understood the most common form of cyber violence experienced by teenage girls to involve toxic forms such as stalking which is prominent in particular social contexts. It can cause girls to be under the surveillance of a person with intentions to harm them and also lead to life-threatening consequences, signifying its gendered and risky nature. Here too, participants referred to girls in their responses, despite the picture not depicting girls, showing evidence of participants' recognition of girls commonly being stalked online. However, research shows that teenage girls commonly experience forms of cyber violence such as being tricked into revealing secrets (En Kwan & Skoric, 2013), sending conversations held with people to others on IM (Kernaghan & Elwood, 2013) and through sexual remarks and upsetting messages (Tustin, Zulu & Basson, 2014). Nevertheless, these findings highlight the subordination of girls in cyberspace, which perpetuates gender inequalities. Forms of cyber violence like stalking, hinder girls' rights to privacy, safety, and freedom of movement. It disrupts their lives and works against the achievement of social justice in society. Cyberstalking featured in the 'worst form of cyber violence' category too, which I discuss below.

I asked the participants to select one picture which they regarded as the worst form of cyber violence a teenage girl can experience, followed by the reasons for their choice. Participants selected different pictures and provided justifications for their responses.

Many participants distinguished picture 5 (name-calling) as the worst form of cyber violence a girl can experience:

> **Siphokazi:** Pic 5 because the girl is being called names on social media like fat, fake, bimbo and stupid, which is bad. (VGD)

> **Hayley:** Pic 5 because she is being called names, which can make her emotional and weak. (VGD)

Name-calling also featured in participants' responses regarding the most common form of cyber violence, showings its prominence as a form of cyber violence. The participants who viewed picture 5 as the worst form of cyber violence a girl can experience held a negative attitude towards it as they felt that the picture pointed to demeaning ways of referring to the girl, leading to consequences such as emotional harm. The policing of girls' appearances and expectations of them to conform to traditional norms of femininity may also cause victims to internalise negative beliefs about themselves and heighten their vulnerability to being violated. Similar to the current study, in terms of gender, Ging & O'Higgins Norman (2016) and Hoff & Mitchell (2009b) also reported that girls were insulted based on their physical appearance, highlighting gendered notions. It serves to regulate girls' behaviour and instils in them fear related to how they project themselves as their social reputations are important to them in forming their online identities.

Many participants selected picture 6 as the worst form of cyber violence a teenage girl can experience. Here too, while it is not identifiable whether picture 6 targets a girl or a boy, the question nevertheless was posed about cyber violence specifically against a girl:

> **Riya:** Pic 6. This person who posted the picture wants someone to die. You should not say things like that to people. It is forcing someone to die. It causes anger and disappointment about what people can do to others. (II)

> **Londeka:** Pic 6. How can you wish a person to die? Is that what you want on your conscience? Then you are messed up, because how will you deal with that once it happens because of you provoking them to take their lives? How can you want such bad things to happen to a person? Some people trouble you on social media and continue physically. I put myself in victims' shoes when I saw this. (II)

Bleach, referred to in the image, is commonly used as a detergent, to whiten and clean surfaces and particular materials. This image has several connotations. Firstly, it directs particular condescending messages to victims with darker skin complexions, portraying evidence of racial intolerance, or colluding with expectations related to physical beauty. Hence, cyber violence occurs not only based on gender but also race. Secondly, bleach is meant for cleaning surfaces, not human consumption, and can result in deadly consequences. It reflects the perpetrator's inhumane and intolerant attitude towards the victim.

Participants' motives for selecting this particular picture were because the sender of the picture had intentions for the receiver of the image to commit suicide, which participants regarded as negative online behaviour. Londeka recognised that such actions were a sign of mental instability and not only cyber harassment but provoking someone to harm themselves physically. This highlights the extension of violence from cyberspace to physical spaces, fostering risks. These comments highlight a rejection amongst participants of toxic forms of cyber violence such as these as they placed themselves in that situation and found it to be disturbing. It suggests that cyber violence affects victims, but also girls exposed to others' violation. While the image selected attempts to coerce the victim into committing suicide, Alao et al., (2006) claimed that youth, on their own accord, utilise online spaces to convey thoughts of wanting to commit suicide. It indicates that young people are not only exposed to violent content online but also post it, which is risky.

In contrast, some participants selected picture 7 as the worst form of cyber violence that a teenage girl can experience. Below I focus on reasons for choosing it which pertain to threats of rape, followed by nasty comments in the next data set:

> **Minenhle:** Pic 7, yoh mam, this is nasty things said online. It threatens rape. Rape is such a big problem in our country, and someone got the nerve to say this. I will feel awful if someone said this to me. *Haibo!* [No/Unacceptable!] (II)

> **Sofia:** Pic 7. They are using vulgar language and threatening to rape her. I feel sorry for the victim. (II)

> **Alisha:** Pic 7 threatens to rape, and you do not know who the person is, so every time you go out of your house, you will be scared. You will worry. You will be afraid to talk about it. You will isolate yourself because of things like this. This is serious and can have bad effects. That is not the way for people to talk to others on social media. (II)

This data provides evidence of participants' awareness of the severe nature of rape threats, which is also the case in a society where young women face heightened risks related to stalking. The reason for the participants above regarding picture 7 as the worst form of cyber violence was because it threatens rape, endangering victims not only online but also offline. Due to its harsh nature, the tweet evoked amongst participants emotions of insecurity, fear, and sympathy for the victim, portraying the participants' opposition to socially unacceptable practices. Sofia and Alisha are critical of the nature of language that perpetrators use online. Alisha's comments show that rape threats may result in stress, silence and social isolation amongst victims, making it difficult for them to lead healthy lives. Hence, she felt that there should not be a trivialisation of such threats.

All the participants in this study regarded online threats of rape as concerning and negatively impacting girls. However, in a study by Lewis, Rowe & Wiper (2017) in the UK amongst 226 young women, a small number of participants indicated that even severe threats like rape did not bother them. This is due to different social contexts and experiences which contribute to particular perceptions about rape. Unsurprisingly, rape is a significant concern amongst the teenage girls in this study since South Africa has among the highest rates of rape in the world.

A few participants classified picture 7 as the worst form of cyber violence against a teenage girl.

> **Faith:** Pic 7. They talk about a girl in a demeaning way. If I were this person, I would not want to live anymore. Twitter is such a big social media; many people use it and may see it. I would not want to face people if it happened to me. (II)

Faith was amongst participants who regarded picture 7 as foul owing to comments about a girl that is disparaging, evokes shame and ruins one's reputation. It highlights socially unacceptable practices that lead to girls wanting to isolate themselves, especially considering the widespread nature of particular forms of social media. They may also want to commit suicide, emphasising the deadly consequences of cyber violence. Allen (2000) and Shariff & Johnny (2007) suggest that risks related to reputation constrain agency and result in such consequences as stated here. I also gathered from the data presented above, that for some girls, risks related to reputation are of a more significant concern than those related to threats of a sexual nature or demeaning comments. It indicates evidence of differing approaches and weightings of the forms of cyber violence, due to girls placing value on image constructions.

Picture 7 contains words associated with violence, like “fucking” and “break her teeth” to put across the perpetrator’s aggressive intentions, which reflect the profanity that teenagers are exposed to online. I draw upon a feature of FPS which focusses on how participants tell their stories from their perspectives (Aston, 2016) as shown here, the participant speaks about the psychological turmoil that the receiver may endure and also what her reaction to the situation would be.

The other participants who categorised picture 7 as the worst form of cyber violence did so as they believed that it shows severe consequences arising from technological innovation:

> **Asanda:** Pic 7. Technology has evolved so much, and such bad things are happening to people online. (II)

> **Niharika:** Pic 7. It is hard to erase once you put it online; people see it. (II)

Asanda’s comment reflects her expectation of developments in cyberspace to have a positive impact, but the opposite is occurring. It casts blame on cyberspace as opposed to negative behaviours online. According to Niharika, the impact of cyber violence is far-reaching, as a large virtual audience is witness to it, coupled with the longevity of online content, which complicates matters. It creates possibilities for content to become viral, to shame victims and to cause irreparable damage. As Burton & Mutongwizo (2009) claim, forms of cyber violence may increase due to technology evolving and becoming more sophisticated. Hence, it is crucial to understand the double-edged sword nature of cyberspace.

I showed participants a meme (picture 8) which depicted the head of a girl and body of a dinosaur. A few participants in the individual interviews expressed that this is the worst form of cyber violence a teenage girl can experience:

> **Nomvelo:** Pic 8 because the dinosaur is a very dangerous and ugly animal and it no longer exists, so they are saying the girl is ugly and does not exist. I feel very sad. (II)

> **Amanda:** Pic 8, the girl is being compared to an animal, but she is beautiful in her own way. It is sad because I wonder what I am compared to. (II)

These participants were amongst those who regarded the meme as the worst form of cyber violence a teenage girl can experience due to it insinuating that a girl is physically unattractive, showing discrimination based on appearance. These findings must be considered in light of research which shows that girls experience concerns related to their appearances more than boys do (Common Sense Media, 2012) as people expect them to look and present themselves in particular ways. Hence, it is a sensitive issue for them when they receive criticism.

Comparing the girl to a dinosaur points out inhumane ways of referring to her. Nomvelo infers that the girl for whom the meme is intended is non-existent, suggesting her exclusion from society and the lack of importance accorded to her. These remarks show that participants recognise the discriminatory nature of such images, which create possibilities for victims to become distressed and to internalise negative notions, contributing to poor self-concepts. Amanda's curiosity about the animal that she is possibly compared to makes it evident that perpetrators commonly use memes to embarrass girls, which create feelings of unpleasantness and insecurity amongst girls.

One of the participants recognised that all of the images depict harmful situations:

> **Daisy:** I would think that all are harsh and can cause a girl to be upset because the things said are very mean. If you have a problem with someone, how can you tell them to die? Also, hacking people's accounts is wrong. (II)

Daisy's response is not surprising, and an indication that forms of cyber violence can be severe, malicious, and distressing. She felt that conflict was not a suitable justification for perpetrating cyber violence and that the hacking of social media accounts was immoral. This shows her disapproval of socially unacceptable practices that harm victims. She, therefore, insinuates that conflict should be resolved in alternate ways, disrupting violent attitudes. The literature shows differing attitudes to cyber violence. Of a similar nature to the current study, most participants in the research done by Shultz, Heilman & Hart (2014) and Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith (2013) condemned cyber violence. However, in Tarapdar & Kellett's (2011) and Baker & Helm's (2010) research, cyber violence was accepted amongst young people, undermining its negative impact, which is concerning. I draw upon a feature of FPS which facilitates an understanding of how people negotiate their values, personal beliefs, and practices related to different beliefs, practices and values contained in social discourses (Aston, 2016), considering that social norms influence how people construct cyber violence.

This theme looked at participants' understandings and awareness that cyber violence occurs in multiple forms, such as bullying, stalking, gossip, invasion of privacy, name-calling, and sexual violation, which differ in degree. The next theme discusses participants' understandings of the identities of perpetrators and victims in cyberspace.

5.4 Identities in cyberspace are complex

This theme comprises two sub-themes, that is:

- **Cyber violence: Not just stranger danger.**
- **Gendered identities of perpetrators and victims.**

5.4.1 Cyber violence: Not just stranger danger

When I prompted the participants about who the perpetrators of cyber violence are, many expressed similar views:

> **Hlengiwe:** You get violated and hurt in cyberspace by people you know and do not know. (VGD)

Hlengiwe was amongst those participants who claimed that unknown and known perpetrators target victims, challenging assumptions that only particular people, such as strangers perpetrate cyber violence. This also suggests that perpetrators do not necessarily conceal their identities, portraying evidence of boldness, and possibly limited fear of reprisal. It differs from the literature, which shows contradictory findings. For example, many studies suggest that victims did not know who violated them (Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011, DePaolis & Williford; 2015; Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). However, some studies reflect that victims knew who violated them (Oosterwyk, 2013; Payne, 2015; Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Hence, it is evident that strangers and known people perpetrate cyber violence, illustrating that the exercising of power is not homogenous. In respect of the findings related to perpetrator identities, it is necessary to relate to Foucault (1982), who posits that there is no uniformity concerning power relations but instead power depending on individual situations.

However, some participants argued that unknown people perpetrate cyber violence:

> **Siphosethu:** Strangers invite you [teenagers] and harm you, and you accept them without knowing the harm it can cause. (VGD)

The belief shared by participants like Siphosethu is that accepting online invitations from strangers is risky. This highlights the regulation of attitudes that stereotype strangers and perpetuate discourses such as 'You asked for it'. Anonymity in online spaces makes it possible for perpetrators to hide their real identities and intentions. They then target and attack victims, which can have undesirable consequences. Therefore, Siphosethu's comment shows recognition that it is crucial to be aware of the dangers that are associated with venturing into the unknown. She insinuates that teenage victims are ignorant and to blame for being violated as they do not necessarily take cognisance of the dangers associated with interacting with unknown people in cyberspace. It suggests that there are many reasons why teenagers accept strangers' invites. This includes wanting to 'brag' about the number of followers or contacts and not associating strangers with risk.

The data presented and discussed within this sub-theme point to the complexity of identities in cyberspace due to aspects such as fake profiles and the feature of anonymity and show that teenage girls possess an understanding that both known and unknown people perpetrate cyber violence. The sub-theme that follows focusses on participants' understandings that the identities of perpetrators and victims are gendered.

5.4.2 Gendered identities of perpetrators and victims

To a question relating to who the perpetrators of cyber violence are, an overwhelming majority of the participants claimed that perpetrators are boys mostly and victims are mostly girls:

> **Melanie:** Boys mostly create cyber violence against girls (II)
>
> **Tyra-Lee:** Boys violate girls; they get angry when girls refuse their demands online. (II)

Participants' claims show that boys wield power in cyberspace and perpetrate cyber violence against girls. Tyra-Lee points out that boys hold particular expectations of girls, showing their dominance online and emphasising gendered norms. This suggests that teenagers' interactions in cyberspace are grounded within gender roles and identities that reinforce constructions of hegemonic masculinity and entrench gender inequalities. It is not a surprising finding but suggests that like physical spaces, social norms also influence relations in cyberspace.

Two participants in the study positioned girls as lacking the ability to perpetrate cyber violence:

> **Melanie:** Girls will not harass boys online, but boys will do it to girls. (II)

> **Zinhle:** Mam, you do not find girls picking on boys online because they know they will get a hiding.

Melanie and Zinhle felt that boys perpetrate cyber violence and not girls, colluding with traditionally held gender stereotypes, which position girls as vulnerable victims of violence. Zinhle's remark indicates that girls view boys as aggressive and are therefore fearful of perpetrating cyber violence against them, as a physically violent reaction from boys would follow. This may happen in cases where they know each other or have access to each other as sometimes they are from different locations. These findings show evidence of male power in cyberspace and physical spaces. Hence, there is a relationship between violence in cyberspace and physical spaces. Later in this chapter, I present contrary views regarding girls perpetrating cyber violence against boys.

However, some participants mentioned that girls could violate girls online in similar ways:

> **Niharika:** Boys embarrass you on Facebook, girls do the same. Girls also be mean to other girls by bullying, verbally abusing and swearing on social media. (II)

There are similarities in how boys and girls violate online. Girls perpetrate violence against girls by adopting methods such as humiliation, intimidation, and verbal abuse, which are generally regarded as stereotypically masculine methods of violation. These findings position girls as not merely passive victims of male violence but also having the capacity to exercise negative power online.

Some participants felt that girls perpetrate cyber violence against girls using different approaches compared to boys:

> **Londeka:** There is a lot of gossiping online by girls about girls. They gossip and compare everything from hair to clothes to looks to personality. (VGD)

Some participants reinforced conventional feminine traits of girls by suggesting that violation from them was mainly in the form of gossiping. This was especially about girls' physical appearances, depicting girls' covert ways of engaging in cyber violence related to aspects

which girls value and place much emphasis on to construct their femininities. This both conforms to and challenges assumptions that girls are merely victims of cyber violence and also contests notions that girls are victims of male violence only. Constructing girls homogenously and colluding with stereotypes of girls as victims only, fails to recognise their exercise of power online, which is problematic. However, this does not suggest that boys do not gossip as this study has shown earlier that they also engage in gossiping.

Other than gossip related to girls' physical appearances, participants also stated that girls gossip about girls' sexualities:

> **Zinhle:** Girls have this thing where they gossip and say girls' secrets and nasty stuff about girls, like they are pregnant, have HIV and stuff. It happens mostly on Facebook. (II)

Several participants attributed gossiping to girls, pointing out stereotypically feminine qualities and also vilifying girls. Furthermore, the social networking site Facebook was commonly referred to as a space where gossip occurs, suggesting that particular online spaces fuel gossip. From the items gossiped about, it is noticeable that there are discussions about private matters and girls' sexual reputations. It may result in negative consequences such as suspicion and disgrace and destroys victims' reputations by using social norms to construct them as immoral. It also attempts to raise perpetrator's social status. Participants in a study administered by Thompson (2016) also expressed their views that girls cause trouble online by spreading others' secrets, yet the type of secrets told are not identifiable. This is in comparison to this study, where the secrets are related to girls' sexualities. I further discuss the aspect of cyber gossip in Chapter Six, related to girls' cyber experiences and in Chapter Seven, the reasons for cyber gossip prevailing.

Quite a few participants felt that girls are nasty to other girls online:

> **Hlengiwe:** Girls are just jealous. Some girls do not like to talk online. They say other girls are ugly. They say other girls' photos are edited too much. (II)

This shows evidence of participants internalising traditional notions of femininity and disparaging girls by suggesting that they are problematic online. It constructs girls as exercising negative power online in an attempt to raise their social status.

In comparison, some participants recognised that girls perpetrate cyber violence against boys:

> **Lisa:** Girls are also doing bad stuff to boys in cyberspace. (II)

This statement contradicts comments made by a participant which was presented earlier about girls not perpetrating cyber violence. It shows how socially constructed gender norms influence girls' perceptions of violence. Girls perpetrating violence against boys online challenges dominant constructions of femininity and masculinity and suggests that girls possess and exercise negative power online in particular circumstances. It also indicates that boys should not be homogenously regarded as perpetrators of cyber violence, as girls also perpetrate cyber violence against them. Nevertheless, as shown in this study, teenage girls' understandings highlight that girls experience cyber violence as both perpetrators and victims, and therefore they should be studied.

From this sub-theme, it is evident that perpetrator and victim identities are gendered and therefore give rise to gender inequalities. The subsequent theme centres on teenage girls' understandings that cyber violence and physical violence are related.

5.5 Cyber violence and physical violence are related

When I asked participants about the relationship between cyberspace and physical spaces, many participants pointed out a strong link between the two.

> **Lisa:** When you have communication with strangers in cyberspace, and then you meet them, they may rape, harass and physically hurt you. (II)

> **Sofia:** Your contacts who are strangers may seem friendly, but they can endanger you, even physically. (II)

These comments point out that cyberspace and physical spaces are connected to the fluid nature of identities and people wanting to project selected images of themselves online to be socially acceptable. The mismatch between the identity of the person portrayed online compared to what they portray offline creates possibilities for undesirable consequences, such as luring victims and physically and sexually harassing them, placing their lives in danger. Hence, this demonstrates that violence does not occur in isolation of a particular space but encompasses both cyberspace and physical spaces due to multiple identities projected. It suggests that online users do not necessarily inhibit themselves from having online or offline contact with strangers.

In Chapter Six, I discuss an incident related to this. Against the background of these findings related to the dynamic nature of identities which link to features such as anonymity and fake profiles online, I draw attention to a feature of FPS which suggests that identities are not fixed but negotiated and shifts due to power (Kondo, 1990). These findings concur with many studies that have discovered a link between cyberspace and physical spaces (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Notar, Padgett, & Roden, 2013; Lindberg et al., 2012; Cheung, 2009; Gergen, 2002; Turkle, 2008).

To a question about whether online issues lead to physical violence, all participants in the virtual group discussion agreed that this occurred:

> **Niharika:** Mostly, girls who have rivals tend to cause violence in school if the matter happened on social media. (VGD)
>
> **Melanie:** People get vulgar online, and when one of them gets angry and wants to meet in person that is when physical fights start. (VGD)
>
> **Riya:** People threaten to harass a person if there is an argument in cyberspace. They trace your location and harm you. (VGD)

Participants claimed that cyber interactions, including conflicts, threats, and harassment, lead to violence shifting to physical spaces, emphasising that these two spaces are interrelated, which is, therefore, a concern. This also indicates that perpetrators do not necessarily get satisfaction from arguing online but also engage in offline violation to "settle scores." Specifically, Niharika emphasised a gendered view that mainly girls who share enmity with other girls lead to a shift of violence from cyberspace to physical spaces. This shows that she constructs girls as agents of violence who engage in violent acts to assert their positions. I draw upon a feature of FPS which suggests that individuals are not passive but rather active in their performances related to different discourses (Gavey, 1989), which we notice about cyberspace users' online behaviour as reflected in the abovementioned data. Hence, it is clear that participants understand that particular online interactions have the potential to create harsh offline impact.

Many participants expressed that there are greater possibilities for physical violence stemming from being monitored online:

> **Zinhle:** Cyberspace is dangerous because of the stalkers on social media who see all your pictures, your location, and it can lead to kidnapping. (VGD)

Here it is evident that while cyberspace features such as the ability to post photographs are valued, they are also misused. This highlights the double-edged sword nature of cyberspace. Perpetrators gain access to victims and engage in practices such as online monitoring and trolling to trace victims and physically harm them, showing the nuanced nature of cyberspace features. It denotes that violence is not restricted to cyberspace in the form of invading victims' privacy, but also extends to physical spaces, jeopardising victims' safety which deprives victims of their rights to interact online.

Many participants said that wanting to defend oneself leads to violence shifting from cyberspace to physical spaces:

> **Daisy:** When teenagers pick on a person's family online, they end up confronting each other in person, and it leads to a fight. (VGD)

> **Amanda:** It happens because teenagers always crave for revenge, and when words online fail, they use their fists. (VGD)

> **Kaylee:** Cyber violence can lead to teenagers becoming physically involved in a fight because one would want to put their words into action to defend themselves. They would want to show the other person that they are right and not wrong. (VGD)

By stating that "teenagers always crave for revenge," Amanda paints teenagers as vindictive and shares her belief that words are insufficient to cause harm, but a physical reaction is needed. These participants stated that physical violence occurs to "settle scores" stemming from online issues, portraying the shifting nature of violence from cyberspace to physical spaces. This is done as Kaylee mentions, to project others as the cause of the problem and blame them, as image constructions are important to young people. The ubiquitous nature of violence, therefore, places victims in risky situations such as confrontation and physical fights. It is evident that the pervasive impact of violence links to power relations. It brings to mind

Foucault's (1982) assertion that power is not a mere confrontation but actions influencing other actions and meaning accorded to the interaction.

Many participants regarded the shifting nature of violence from cyberspace to physical spaces as having life-threatening consequences:

> **Sasha:** Cyber violence can lead to murder, bullying and stalking. (II)

Violence in cyberspace creates possibilities for fatal real-life consequences, pointing again to the relationship between cyberspace and physical spaces. It also illustrates that perpetrators do not restrict the tormenting of a victim to online spaces, but also extend such behaviours offline. This emphasises the doubly damaging nature of such processes. Hence, there should not be a trivialisation of cyber violence owing to the adverse consequences associated with it.

When I asked participants about whether the transfer of violence also occurred from physical spaces to cyberspace, there was unanimous agreement. For example, **Siphosethu** said:

> If a video was made during a physical fight between enemies, then it is posted on social media, causing those involved to argue more on social media. (VGD)

According to some participants, violence shifts from physical spaces to cyberspace when people video record physical fights and post it online. This causes further conflict, resulting from a more extensive exposure to the incident and further embarrassment. It also shows the advanced nature of technological innovations misused by bystanders who view this as an opportunity to create hype about the fight. Siphosethu's comments are in the context of hostility. However, in Kernaghan & Elwood's (2013) study amongst 494 participants, it was gathered that there is an interweaving of teenagers' friendships from school with cyberspace and that processes such as happy slapping occur in such contexts. It shows violence shifting from physical spaces to cyberspace in different types of relationships.

In some cases, participants pointed out that in physical fights, victims too are not necessarily passive but adopt violent measures online to protect their image supposedly:

> **Sofia:** Sometimes, victims do not accept defeat from physical fights and hence extend the fights onto cyberspace to avoid being called cowards. (VGD)

Violence shifts from physical spaces to cyberspace when victims of physical violence assume the role of a perpetrator to challenge and defeat the initial perpetrator, possibly to seek revenge as perpetrators intend to torment victims further. Being viewed condescendingly and as a 'loser' may contribute to role reversal, considering that social reputations are important to young people. Violence becomes a cycle and a competition to show who is stronger than the other. It may also be attributed to victims feeling invincible and courageous in front of a screen, as Livingstone et al., (2014) assert that computer screens result in breakages in moral proximity, depicting the evolved nature of cyberspace features which allow for multiple identities to prevail. Contrary to this, in a Canadian-based study conducted by Mishna et al., (2012) amongst boys and girls from grades 6 to 11, a category of cyberbully-victims emerged as teenagers sometimes sought revenge online against those that had bullied them online. It illustrates revenge-seeking in the same space that the initial fight occurred.

This theme explored how violence shifts between cyberspace and physical spaces. It is evident that there is a strong interrelationship between these two spaces within which discrimination, confrontation and acts of revenge occur.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the first research question by analysing teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence. From the findings revealed in this chapter, it is not surprising to note that cyber violence is damaging and mainly affects girls but also affects boys, showing that it is not limited to particular individuals. Hence, neither boys nor girls should be homogenised as victims or perpetrators only. This chapter, therefore, argues that teenage girls possess detailed understandings about cyber violence, its forms, perpetrator and victim identities, and its relationship to physical violence. The next chapter addresses the second research question about how teenage girls experience cyber violence.

Chapter Six: Teenage girls' experiences of cyber violence

6.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I presented and analysed data related to teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence. This is the second of three analysis chapters, and it focusses on how teenage girls experience cyber violence (research question 2). It turned out to be a lengthy chapter, since the analysis on how they experience cyber violence could not be separated from why they experience it. Hence, the unavoidable overlap with the third research question, which I address in detail in the next chapter.

Participants (teenage girls) narrated a wide range of experiences of cyber violence: most being their own experiences, some being those of their peers, and some being those they have witnessed online. Substantial research shows that teenage girls are mainly victims of cyber violence; it is, therefore, crucial to draw on their voices. I also requested participants to share experiences where they have perpetrated cyber violence, as the literature points out that girls perpetrate cyber violence (Thompson, 2016; Tanenbaum, 2015; Poole 2014; Miliford, 2013; Ging & O'Higgins Norman, 2016; Lucero et al., 2014; Girlguiding, 2013; Perry, 2015; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; Armstrong et al., 2014). These findings from studies show that girls exercise power online. The experiences of cyber violence that participants narrated were boy to girl, girl to girl, older men to girls, and abuse by unknown perpetrators.

This chapter presents and analyses data from individual face-to-face interviews only as experiences of cyber violence are of a sensitive and private nature. Hence, I limited asking this question only in the individual face-to-face interviews. In retrospect, I believe that this was methodologically sound since, as I mentioned in Chapter Four, participants were guarded about what they said in the virtual group discussion. However, participants' responses to questions in the individual face-to-face interviews were detailed. This is because some issues that participants spoke of were about participants in the group, and this could cause conflict. Furthermore, I was aware that some participants had problems with other participants in this study before I began the sampling process. Hence, to avoid causing harm (which would contradict ethical principles), I implemented the abovementioned strategy.

In this chapter, I acknowledge some overlap of forms of cyber violence due to their interrelationship with each other. Hence the themes are not mutually exclusive. I present and analyse teenage girls' experiences of cyber violence within the following themes:

- **Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?**
- **Cyber accounts hacked, image tainted.**
- **Cyberstalking contravenes girls' rights to privacy.**
- **Cyber harassment associated with the 'You asked for it!' discourse.**
- **Cyber violence: a feature in teenagers' dating relationships.**
- **Being in a gossip room: Girls serving a storm of stories online.**

In the first theme of this chapter, I present and analyse data relevant to how teenage girls experience cyber violence in the form of policing of physical representations.

6.2 Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?

How girls look and present themselves online is of great importance to themselves and boys. Criticising girls' physical appearance in online spaces publicly attacks them and is, therefore, damaging to them.

Many participants narrated experiences related to their beauty being under the surveillance of others. Hlengiwe spoke about one such experience regarding a boy:

> **Hlengiwe:** My friend created a WhatsApp group and added other people and us, all of the African race. I do not know who this boy is, and he started teasing me saying I am ugly, I am black and I must not be in this group because this group is only for beautiful people. He even in-boxed me and told me to get out of the group. I do not belong there. Then I told my friend what the boy did to me. I do not know why he did that because he was a stranger to me. Some girls will break down and cry. I saw that this experience made me a stronger person. It was painful and embarrassing; people in the group were laughing at me. I told this boy that even though he said all that, I did not care what he thought of me, because I know what I think of myself, in the group I told him. He carried on irritating me and saying I can say what I like. It was hard, but it helped to have a good friend because my friend defended me and removed him from the group. After a few days, I forgot about it. I did not take any action or report it. Now, I do not post as much as I used to. I do not comment as much as I used to. I am afraid of what people will think or how they will respond. (II)

Hlengiwe was an African girl and so were the other members in the group, illustrating that the perpetrator was violating a victim of the same race as himself. By mentioning this, I by no means attempt to label African people as perpetrators of cyber violence, as issues related to

other races also emerged. One of which is about an Indian man and will be discussed later on in the chapter. Furthermore, such dynamics about race can be related to the constitution of one's online contacts.

Hlengiwe faced nasty comments in the virtual presence of others from an unknown boy. He was judgemental and insulting of her physical appearance (she being of darker skin colour). This depicts that girls' physical appearances are under boys' surveillance. It also shows that people within a particular race group display condescending attitudes to people of the same race, highlighting a hierarchy of power within a race. Drawing on a feature of FPS, I recognise multiple power relations, such as race and gender (St Pierre, 2000).

The perpetrator, who was preoccupied with particular notions of beauty, was male. This differs from Thompson's (2016) research amongst 130 Australian girls aged 13, where participants stated that girls utilised foul language to refer to the appearance of other girls. Hence, criticism based on appearance is not limited to perpetration by a particular gender. Nevertheless, Thompson's (2016) findings are possible in light of that context. In Hlengiwe's account, the boy condemned her for an appearance that did not conform to traditional expectations of femininity. It perpetuates discrimination against girls who, according to perpetrators, do not fit this criterion.

In analysing data about coercion of victims into conducting themselves in ways that society expects them to, FPS is beneficial as it interrogates boundaries that are coercive and force people to conform to particular norms (Carey et al., 2017). It is evident that while Hlengiwe experienced mixed emotions, she exercised some degree of agency and particular skills of engaging in cyberspace by rebuking the perpetrator, challenging notions that girls are passive recipients of cyber violence. Furthermore, she believes her reaction is contrary to the typical reaction of girls who become emotional. By making this statement, she homogenises girls based on essentialist notions. She regarded this experience as helping her to become stronger and rise above the negative aspects online. This finding contradicts findings by Cheung (2009), Schultze-Krumbholz et al., (2012), Mishna et al., (2012) and Girlguiding (2013), who associated cyber violence as effortlessly leading to emotional distress. Hlengiwe experiences what Vandoninck, d'Haenens & Roe (2013) describe as online resilience, whereby a person can deal with negative online experiences. However, this does not necessarily condone negative online behaviours as the experience harmed her to a certain degree, showing the complexity of emotions experienced.

The perpetrator shamed her in the virtual presence of others which created possibilities for the victim to internalise negative notions about herself and have a poor self-concept. Some people in the group laughed at the victim, which shows how the bystanders' actions also contribute to the negative emotions that victims experience. It also led to her becoming more self-conscious online, making particular decisions about when to interact online and how to conduct herself. This somewhat constrained her freedom.

Another participant narrated a similar experience of being violated online due to disapproval of her appearance, and she too challenged the perpetrator. However, in this case, the reaction from the virtual audience was different:

> **Minenhle:** Once someone commented on my pic. I had something on my head (a bandana). I took a pic. People were making good comments. Then this boy, I know, commented negatively. He said, what are you wearing on your head? I said, can't you see? He said it does not suit you. I was so shocked, how dare he? People on Facebook asked him what his problem is. Can't he see the pic is nice? People told him to go to hell. I did get hurt because I did not know the reason why he did that. I wanted to take out the pic then I saw positive comments from others, I said no why must I entertain him and give him attention. I will continue being myself. I did ask him why he did not keep his comments to himself. Then he carried on irritating me. Then I said no, I do not have time to argue with him, because he would continue and I would feel bad. I thought to let people see this and let me read their comments. I then blocked this boy. I think that if this happens to others, they should report it on Facebook because you cannot let people behave in this way. It is not a small matter to be judged over social media where everyone can see. This is now a space where people just talk, and they show how immature they are. You cannot have a small understanding of how we should behave in cyberspace. I became aware of those who invited and in-boxed me after that. (II)

Like Hlengiwe, Minenhle was also condemned online due to a boy's disapproval of the way she was presented in her picture, highlighting a regulation and policing of girls' appearances by dominant male actors. It also reflects an emphasis on hegemonic masculinities, which normalises particular social discourses. He verbally attacked her in the presence of a virtual audience. However, the perpetrators' comments were not received passively by the victim and others online, but rather with contempt, as she challenged his expectations of her to present herself in particular ways, portraying agency. This goes against findings by Haylock et al.,

(2016), who researched a sample of participants from many countries who were of varying age groups and walks of life and claimed that technology is utilised to silence people, as Minenhle ensured that she voiced her opinions. The bystanders in this particular experience did not accept the violence in silence or collude with the socially unacceptable practices of the perpetrator. They openly criticised the perpetrator's behaviour, showing their disapproval of his actions. In contrast, participants in a study by Shultz, Heilman & Hart (2014) involving 149 American youth aged 18-27 years, reported that while they witnessed cyberbullying, they refrained from commenting online. They chose to speak to the victim personally, as they did not want to get involved.

By using the words "it is not a small matter", it is evident that Minenhle does not trivialise cyber violence, which I also showed in the discussion in chapter five. However, in research administered by Marwick & Boyd (2011); Cassidy, Jackson & Brown (2009); Talwar, Gomez-Garibello & Shariff (2014), there was evidence of young people trivialising cyber violence. Minenhle regarded the perpetrator's behaviour as intolerable because rules about conduct on social media is common knowledge to users; in that way homogenising cyberspace users as knowledgeable, which can be problematic. Nevertheless, while Minenhle possessed knowledge about how to deal with cyber violence (that is, settings to report violation), she did not make use of it as she blocked the perpetrator. This reflects a mismatch between a teenager's knowledge and their actions. Along with witnesses to the incident, she reprimanded him, fuelling confrontational behaviour.

The experiences discussed above focus on boys policing girls' beauty, while issues related to girls' beauty also feature in the context of girls competing with each other:

> Riya: This one girl commented something nasty about another girl on Facebook. She told her that she is going to break this girl's teeth. She was jealous of the girl's beauty, so she threatened her. Other girls in the same group also threatened to assault the girl at school. The victim was a very popular girl on social media. She was very embarrassed. She felt insecure. She deactivated her account. She reported it to some teachers at school. She did not inform the police. Many people at school saw this online, so they started making rumours about her. People talk to her at school but not as much as they used to. (II)

Riya narrates this experience from a bystander perspective which suggests that young people do not only experience cyber violence as victims or perpetrators but as bystanders too. Here, she acknowledges the conflict that occurs online. Contrastingly, girls who participated in a study done by Ging & O'Higgins Norman (2016) maintained that from their perspective, everyone got along online despite them also talking about the conflict they witnessed online, showing evidence of denial of serious issues.

Riya suggests that a group of girls who were envious of a girl's beauty threatened to harm the victim physically. It constructs girls as wanting to raise themselves on the social hierarchy by undermining other girls. In this case, cyber violence was perpetrated against the victim due to her popular status, which she lost since this experience. Comparatively, a study by Gradinger, Strohmeier, Schiller, Stefanek & Spiel (2012) showed that being victimised online led to girls becoming popular, in that way legitimising negative experiences.

This incident caused the victim to feel ashamed, and she lacked confidence, due to image constructions being important to young people. As a consequence, the victim did not share normal relationships with people as she had previously; neither did she communicate on Facebook any longer. It reflects her holding cyberspace accountable for being violated. Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman & Eden (2012) and Baker & Carreno (2016) also associated cyber victimisation with consequences such as social isolation.

It is evident that girls are able to take control of their lives as the victim demonstrated agency by reporting the matter. In contrast, teenage participants in a study done by Hopkins et al., (2013) were reluctant to report experiencing cyber violence. This was a serious incident, and the victim reported it to teachers, but there was no action taken against the perpetrators. It shows a lack of redress for violation experienced and is an issue that can heighten cyber violence. Correspondingly, a statement by Kritzinger (2017) indicated that teachers and schools in SA do not adequately address issues related to cyber safety. Hence, difficulties associated with interventions are noticeable.

This theme explored teenage girls experiencing cyber violence from perpetrators who police their beauty, leading to harm of their reputations, considering that girls place value on the construction of their images. Experiences reflected demonstrate girls' beauty being under the surveillance of mostly boys, and in some cases of girls. This shows that there is not necessarily uniformity in the gender of perpetrators. In some instances, as with Minenhle and Hlengiwe,

girls reject the violence online but do not report it, while in a few cases like the one that Riya describes, victims do not respond online but report the matter. It depicts how girls react differently to violent cyber incidences, possibly due to their particular beliefs about violence and how they are socialised. The theme that follows explores how teenage girls experience cyber hacking.

6.3 Cyber accounts hacked, image tainted

Hacking as a form of violence is only related to cyberspace and is associated with complexities such as the perpetrator being unidentifiable in some cases, which is problematic. Many participants narrated experiences about boys hacking girls' cyber accounts:

> **Lisa:** A few months ago, a boy I know hacked into my Facebook account. He tried to put in the password and went through the steps of a forgotten password. He managed to log into my account and posted stuff on my wall. He wrote that I ate some berries and lost weight. People on Facebook saw that, and they were like what is happening to you? They thought I posted that and asked if I was going mad. This boy was about 20 years old. I do not know why he did this to me. I did chat with him previously, and he asked me to meet with him. I said no because it did not mean that if I accepted him on Facebook that I wanted to meet with him or have any other relationship with him. It only meant friendship on Facebook and no other friends. He got angry with me and went and posted all this stuff about me. It did not affect me to an extent [that] I wanted to delete Facebook. I was disappointed and a little embarrassed. I did go back and post on Facebook and wrote that it was someone who hacked into my account that wrote such things. Generally, I post pictures of myself –and people would have thought I was a fat person and [that] I posted wrong pictures and lied about my identity. So, I corrected it on Facebook and told people those posts were a lie. This boy also went onto my wall and posted that it was a mistake what he did. I told my parents about it; they asked me to delete Facebook, but I did not feel a need to do that. I went onto Facebook, told this boy that what he did was wrong, and then blocked him. (II)

This experience posits that cybersecurity mechanisms are insufficient in preventing risks as they allow perpetrators to resist control mechanisms, gain access to a victim's password, and log into their account. Here, a boy circumvented the security settings of a cyber application by hacking, which shows the nuanced tactics that boys' adopt to wield power over girls by

invading their privacy, which is a gendered finding. The hacker engaged in masquerading. He pretended to be Lisa then posted false information about the cause of her slender appearance, resulting in her being shamed.

The perpetrator adopting such tactics in an attempt to seek revenge for the victim rejecting his invitations to meet him in person suggests that boys' are persistent and expect their romantic advances to be accepted and reciprocated. If not, they violate girls online. This shows the prominence of hegemonic notions of masculinity, not only offline but online also. Mascheroni, Vincent & Jimenez (2015) observed in their study in the UK, Spain, and Italy amongst boys and girls aged 11-16 years that boys negatively sanctioned girls for posing in sexy ways for photos. In comparison, Lisa's experience illustrates that boys negatively sanction girls for rejecting their romantic advances. It reinforces male power though sustaining gendered roles and performances.

Despite hacking being a criminal offence, Lisa did not report the perpetrator but instead responded by correcting the online posts and confronting him online about his inappropriate actions. It highlights her prioritising aspects related to her physical appearance as opposed to seeking justice. This is due to images being important in identity formation, highlighting normative constructions of femininity. Through such choices, girls normalise certain behaviours, condoning violence.

Lisa disapproved of the creation of a false impression about her appearance, which is not a surprising finding since it is related to constructions of femininity. She reported the matter to her parents and refusing to take their advice about deleting her social media account, suggests that she does not want to relinquish her right to interact online as she embraces the positive features of cyberspace. Furthermore, she does not blame cyberspace for the perpetrator's negative behaviour online, which differs from some of the participants' views in this study.

While a boy known to Lisa hacked her account, Nolwazi was amongst participants whose accounts were hacked by an unknown person:

> **Nolwazi:** My Facebook account was once hacked. I am not sure if it was a he or she. He or she posted my pictures, posted nasty comments about me on my wall. I do not know why he or she did it to me. It affected me so badly because people screenshot those comments and sent it around; people were talking about me at school and laughing at me. They thought I wrote those things. Then I created a new account, and I

> used my privacy settings. I reported about the other Facebook account to Facebook. I told my parents, and they asked me to ignore it. When I got a new account, I wrote about it and told people my story. I am serious about privacy settings because on social media, you also have people who are strangers. I do not post my pictures anymore. Hacking of accounts is frequent. (II)

Perpetrators hacked Nolwazi's Facebook account and harmed her image, online and offline, pointing out that the impact of cyber violence is not restricted to cyberspace but also physical spaces. This is a concern, as Chisala-Tempelhoff & Kirya (2016) assert that online and offline spaces are intertwined. As shown here, despite Facebook having settings to report practices such as hacking, it is challenging to trace perpetrators due to anonymity and fake identities, heightening risks of invasion of one's privacy.

While in Lisa's experience her parents requested her to delete her Facebook account, showing their disapproval of cyberspace, Nolwazi's comments indicate evidence of her parents trivialising the experience, despite its adverse impact on her. This differs from many other cases in this study, where parents did not belittle such issues. However, Nolwazi's parent's reactions are similar to that of parents in a study by Strom et al., (2012) who found that parents underestimated cyber violence, in that way exacerbating matters and limiting sources of assistance for teenagers who seek intervention.

Reporting the matter to Facebook was also met with a lack of redress for the issue which compounds matters. Cyber violence may alter the online social habits of victims, as Nolwazi changed her cyber habits and chose not to post pictures due to feeling self-conscious. She was profoundly affected negatively by this experience. It differs from findings attained by Ortega et al., (2012), who found that victims of cyber violence are less affected by it, in that way undermining the impact of cyber violence.

Nolwazi took action by sharing her story online so that other SNS users may become aware of potential dangers. She also acted by changing her online social habits in an attempt to ensure safety. This was also recognisable from many of the other experiences recounted by participants in this study. She demonstrated agency by making use of the privacy settings on Facebook. In comparison, Popovac & Leoschut (2012) contend that youth are lacking in terms of negotiating safe online practices

Within this theme, I presented and analysed teenage girls experiencing cyber violence as victims of cyber hacking perpetrated by known perpetrators in some instances (such as Lisa's) and unknown perpetrators in other cases (such as Nolwazi's). It signifies the sophisticated nature of cyberspace, which allows for perpetrators to conceal their real identities. In both cases, the victims faced double violation through hacking and the ruining of their reputations, stemming from unfavourable information circulated about them. It is imperative to consider this as image constructions are essential, especially to teenage girls. Both Lisa and Nolwazi told their stories because they want to make people aware of online occurrences which denotes their agency in striving to assist others. In the theme that follows, I focus on teenage girls experiencing cyber violence as victims of cyberstalking.

6.4 Cyberstalking contravenes girls' rights to privacy.

While physical stalking is limited to spaces surrounding victims, cyberstalking can occur from anywhere in the world, owing to more significant opportunities for perpetrators to access victims through cyberspace.

When I questioned participants about their experiences of cyber violence, some communicated experiences related to boys or men stalking girls:

> **Sasha:** A man from India sent me a message. He asked me about my location. He said that I am very pretty; he wants to meet me and marry me. I said no. He said he has a lot of money to offer me. I blocked him because he in-boxed me, flirted with me and was stalking me. I was scared. I reported what he did to me on Facebook. I do not chat to strangers or invite them anymore. (II)

Sasha's experience shows how the perpetrator was possibly trolling the victim online, trying to access personal information about her and coerce her into a transactional relationship with him. Such experiences lead to the objectification of girls' bodies and the invasion of their privacy. Being guided by FPS is constructive in the sense that it plays a role in interrogating existing boundaries, as some boundaries are coercive (Carey et al., 2017), like in this case, where the man pressured Sasha to adhere to his request.

A man from another country stalked Sasha, which points out the advanced nature of cyberspace, which is misused, leading to risky conditions. It may instil fear in girls and deter them from wanting to interact in cyberspace, in that way, fostering gender inequalities.

Nevertheless, Sasha demonstrated agency as she resisted offers made (even in one of her other experiences, that I focus on later in this chapter). She displayed awareness about ways to deal with cyber violence like reporting it and was resilient online. This contradicts findings attained by Hopkins et al., (2013), who asserted that teenagers were hesitant to report being violated. However, despite her reporting it to Facebook, there was no redress for the situation, depicting the limitations of cyber mechanisms in assisting users with the issues they experience.

Sasha's experience pertains to a strange man from abroad, while Lisa's experience concerns a known boy from her area; perpetrators in both the cases were persistent in their approach:

> **Lisa:** This boy was stalking me and being flirty towards me on Facebook, and I sent him a message telling him that if he does not stop, I will come to his house and complain to his parents because I knew him and I will tell my parents, [and] if they come to know, it would become a big problem. If he did not stop, I would block him. I was not vulgar, but I just told him off. I told all my friends about him as well, so they also become aware of it. I did this because I believe I am a girl, and from the home I was brought up in, boys chatting to me in a flirty way is disrespectful. I also did it because I had experiences of being violated, and I now had the courage to tell him off. This boy violated my friend, and she was quiet about it, and when he tried to do it to me, I put a stop to it. I put the pieces together; I realised he was the one who hacked my friend's Facebook account. This boy lives in my area. He was also sending messages to my friend and tried to ruin her relationship. I realised this from the tone of his messages, so I asked him about it, and he said he was just playing a game. I asked him if he thought it was funny. I went to his house and told his parents because even though he would stop doing it to me, I thought maybe if he goes and does it to other girls. His parents were hitting him in front of me. My dad and I also gave him a *klap* [slap]. He was banned from going anywhere. (II)

I was aware that this participant was in a dating relationship. Her parents were also aware of the relationship. She often posted pictures of herself with her boyfriend on Facebook, together with comments and statuses in connection with her relationship. It is possible that to protect her relationship with her boyfriend, she reacted violently, especially considering that young women place value on notions of love and romance.

Lisa's experience emphasises that while some girls disapprove of being flirted with, they are viewed and treated by boys in a sexualised way online and not taken seriously. It stems from notions that it is boys' or men's right to flirt with girls/women, without needing their permission, sustaining gendered roles and performances. As a result, this reinforces male power, contributing to girls being subordinated and experiencing consequences such as fear, discomfort, and sexual violation. However, as noted in this case, victims may also retaliate to violence, fuelling conflict further. It demonstrates role reversal and multiple identities arising.

As evident from this case, Lisa experienced cyber flirtation and stalking perpetrated on Facebook. Her friend's Facebook account was hacked by the same perpetrator, which demonstrates that perpetrators are involved in perpetrating cyber violence against more than one victim in different forms utilising the same medium. This finding is dissimilar to the findings of Li (2007) and Olumide, Adams & Amodu (2015) that cyber violence frequently occurs by utilising more than one type of medium.

Lisa also experienced cyber violence before this event (her other experience is in theme one of this chapter), which shows that girls may have recurring incidents of cyber violence perpetrated against them by boys, reinforcing gender disparities. The perpetrator, in this instance, did not view cyber violence as a serious matter, showing evidence of trivialising, which exacerbates matters. However, Lisa felt disgruntled at the perpetrator's curt attitude to his negative behaviours, as she recognised the severity of its impact. This conflicts with findings by Marwick & Boyd (2011); Cassidy, Jackson & Brown (2009); Talwar, Gomez-Garibello & Shariff (2014), where there was evidence of participants trivialising online violation, which is concerning.

Lisa warned the perpetrator against his actions, but he did not pay heed to her, which depicts that perpetrators possibly do not take victims seriously and also do not believe that victims would take action. Hence, they are persistent in their endeavours to violate. She reported the matter to her parents and his parents, showing her agency and recognising that the situation was becoming complex and challenging to handle. In comparison, findings from many studies reflected that victims of cyber violence do not report matters (DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Li, 2007; Slonje, Smith & Frisen, 2013; Keith & Martin, 2005) for various reasons. Lisa and her father physically beat up the perpetrator, seeking revenge in physical forms for a violation that occurred online, which depicts how violence in cyberspace may contribute to violence in physical spaces. Lisa reflects agency as she was not only concerned with beating up the

perpetrator but also showed a degree of concern for other girls who may also be violated by the same perpetrator who violated her if she did not intervene. I draw upon a feature of FPS, which requires one to be mindful that individuals are not passive. They are active and have choices regarding how they position themselves concerning different discourses (Gavey, 1989) as shown above, Lisa positions herself as someone who destabilises notions that young women passively and silently accept being violated.

A boy also stalked Niharika, but she did not react violently like Lisa:

> **Niharika:** Once I went to my aunt's complex for a holiday and this boy from the complex asked for my number. I told him that my WhatsApp was not working. He took the number from his sister and kept annoying me, so I blocked his invites from different numbers, and he lied about who he was. He kept viewing my pictures and commenting in a flirty way. He did that because he feels that he can be friends with anyone and any number of girls because he was rich. His father owned the complex, and he gets what he wants. Boys can have many girlfriends but talk about how bad girls are. It made me more self-aware about how I made friends. You cannot be friendly with everyone, as not everyone has the same intentions. I thought about what if I did not tell anyone about what happened and then it would end up bad. I told my aunt, and she said she would speak to him. He never spoke to me again after that. (II)

Like Lisa, I was aware that Niharika also had a boyfriend, and hence she may have disapproved of being propositioned by the perpetrator, considering her existing relationship. A boy was stalking Niharika and flirting with her. He invited her from different contact numbers and lied about his identity, to pursue a relationship with her. It makes this form of violence different from physical stalking, as perpetrators may conceal their real identities in the cyber accounts they create to enable their access to victims, emphasising that online identities are not static but fluid. By lying about her WhatsApp not working, she attempts to reject his advances, which shows the strategies that girls adopt to avoid boys. However, while Lisa regards the boys' actions as online trolling, features of particular cyberspace applications allow users to view other's posts, which is also part of online social networking. It emphasises the double-edged sword nature of cyberspace.

When Niharika referred to boys' perceptions of girls and their conduct, she draws attention to the binaries in a society where boys share the belief that it is acceptable for them to have multiple dating partners, but disapprove of such behaviours from girls, entrenching gender inequalities. Niharika disapproved of how the perpetrator treated her, regarded his actions as unjustifiable, and resisted his continuous attempts to violate her. This reaction shows her agency and her efforts to challenge male power.

From this experience, it seems that Niharika also colluded with stereotypical notions that being friendly caused cyber violence and blamed herself for being violated. However, the perpetrator mistook her friendship as a sexual invitation. A significant trend that emerged from this study was that due to the negative experiences teenage girls faced online, many of them spoke about their attitudes and conduct altering after being violated. This change in attitude was towards friends, strangers, or cyberspace itself. The change in conduct related to a loss of faith in cyber networks. Girls decreased their online presence or deleted their cyber accounts.

However, in the instance below, the perpetrator concealed his identity:

> **Akira:** A boy that was initially unknown to my friend was calling and sending messages online to her. He threatened her, saying he was standing outside her house. She freaked out; she was scared and nervous as he said he was coming to get her, also sexual threats. She started to get scared and nervous and did not know how to react because it came out of nowhere. Her brother works for an IT company, so she went to him and told him to trace it. It turned out to be someone she knew. Her family kept the key under the door, and he knew this. He probably had a grudge against her. He eventually stopped because she also threatened to call the police, so he got scared. After that, she built up walls; she is scared about what can happen. She is conservative and keeps to herself now. (II)

This experience illustrates that cyberspace does not limit the access of perpetrators to victims, and does not always enforce accurate identification of cyberspace users. However, it creates access for perpetrators to stalk victims and makes provision for creating accounts with fake details, as the victim in the case above faced constant threats from a boy who masked his real identity. It reflects the sophisticated nature of cyberspace features. These findings differ from Thompson's (2016) investigation amongst 130 Australian girls aged 13, where girls who

participated admitted to concealing their real identities. This suggests that it is not only boys who masquerade but also girls who possess and exercise negative power online.

Later on, the identity of the perpetrator became known to the victim with the assistance from her brother, who has IT skills. It shows that there are strategies to trace online activity. It was initially challenging for the victim to deal with the perpetrator's constant threats and surveillance, hindering her rights to privacy and safety. The cyber threats resulted in the victim feeling insecure, uneasy, and afraid. However, research administered by Ortega et al., (2012) in Italy, Spain, and England showed that victims of cyber violence were less affected by it, which fails to acknowledge the harsh effects of the phenomenon.

Being unaware of how to respond to the situation leads to possibilities for continued violation from perpetrators. It positions girls as lacking knowledge about ways to deal with cyber violence. Nevertheless, the victim, in this case, did exercise some agency later on by having the issue investigated. She also reacted in a way that caused the perpetrator to stop threatening her. The experience resulted in not only short-term harm but also long-term adverse effects such as social isolation as she possibly internalised notions that secluding herself equates to safety. This is a trend in this study, whereby girls' online choices and conduct changes after being violated. They become conscious about their online conduct and police themselves.

This theme featured evidence of teenage girls experiencing cyberstalking that boys or men perpetrate, denoting evidence of male power over girls. In incidents like Niharika's, there was evidence of cyber violence due to occurrences in cyberspace. Experiences like Lisa's demonstrate that cyber violence also leads to violence in physical spaces. These findings, therefore, suggest that violence is a ubiquitous phenomenon which raises several concerns. In all of the experiences in this theme, the victims rejected perpetrators' actions. They also reported the matter to either a family member or Facebook. Thus, girls should not be homogenised as passive recipients of violence. The next theme draws attention to the harassment of girls online.

6.5 Cyber harassment associated with the 'You asked for it!' discourse

Cyberspace provides perpetrators with added opportunities due to the nuanced nature of online features allowing them to harass victims and contributing to victims feeling suffocated.

In response to a question that required participants to speak about experiences of cyber violence, many participants claimed that girls mostly perpetrate cyber harassment against girls in different forms:

> **Hayley:** One girl's boyfriend used to talk to me. I did not know they were dating. He told her a different story. She went through his phone later on, and he was talking to me on that day. She saw it (our messages), and she got angry. She and I did have issues previously where she bullied me in person and called me names like bitch. When she found out about this, he told me about it. She always used to gossip about me on social media, so I did not do anything. Then one day I posted a picture of myself on Facebook, she commented nasty things, she called me a whore. My friends commented in my defence, and they started fighting, then at school, she confronted me about it. She was worrying me. I told her it was not my fault and to ask her boyfriend. She came with her friends who are big bullies, she pushed me and called me a bitch, so I got upset and slapped her, then I went to my teacher and told her. I had to defend myself because you cannot go around calling people that. After that, on Facebook, she used to put captions like all these girls being jealous bitches and here's to my haters, and I knew she meant it for me. She was jealous about this boy issue, but we had issues from pre-school. I cried a lot, it affected me, because why was I blamed for something that I did not do? I told my parents about it. I told my teacher that I slapped her. We went to her parents to sort the problem. She apologised but continued, then I ignored her and unfriended her because I got fed up. It caused many problems. Social media is not good because it tempts us to do bad things. I use social media less now. (II)

Hayley's experience posits that girls slut-shame girls who they believe are a threat to their dating relationships. Girls are harassed and blamed for the problems in other girls' dating relationships, while boys are not necessarily held accountable. Social norms and practices reinforce double standards in society as Hayley faced negative judgement related to her conduct while this was not the case with the boy. While Tanenbaum (2015) and Poole (2014) assert that envious girls slut-shame girls who are physically attractive to raise their positions on the social

hierarchy, the data, in this case, reflects that girls slut-shame girls related to competition for boys' attention.

Grudges between the girls led to violence in cyberspace and physical confrontations in the form of name-calling, hitting, and swearing, portraying girls as not merely passive recipients of violence but also aggressors. As a teacher at the school, I was aware of the fight on the school grounds related to these girls. Educators described it as a major fight that drew a large crowd of learners who were spectators. Most of the learners encouraged the girls to fight, propagating violence. Hence, the interchanging of violence from cyberspace to physical spaces creates possibilities for harsh consequences. This refutes a comment by Wiseman (2002), who states that young men physically bully while females use words and bully behind the scenes, as the girls referred to in this case were involved in violating each other physically and in cyberspace. Therefore, girls should not be classed homogenously as victims of violence. Hayley violated the perpetrator back, which is a defence mechanism, and shows that victims do not necessarily receive the violation in silence. It inflames issues further and signifies what Law et al., (2012) classify as the reversal of roles as the person initially violated decides to violate the perpetrator. I draw upon a feature of FPS, which suggests that identities are not fixed but shift due to power and cultural meanings located therein (Kondo, 1990). I recognise the fluid and ambiguous nature of identities reflected above in Hayley's conduct as a victim, then as a perpetrator.

Hayley reported the matter to a teacher and her parents in an attempt to resolve it. In comparison, Agatston, Kowalski & Limber (2007) reported from their American-based study amongst 148 participants aged 12-17 years that it was not likely that teenagers would report cyber violence at school. It is due to the prohibition of mobile phones in schools and beliefs about the schools' inability to deal with problems. As shown earlier in this chapter also, there is significant evidence of teenage girls' reporting about cyber violence either to their parents, the police or making use of reporting mechanisms online. However, Hayley's incident is similar to Tsaliki & Chronaki's (2010) findings, where parents experienced difficulty in dealing with cyber threats. While reporting abuse is a step towards prevention, appropriate action has to be taken by people who understand how to deal with this specific type of violence.

Hayley shared a negative view of cyberspace due to the violence prevailing online, in that way holding cyberspace accountable for cyber violence. Hence, she chose to ignore the perpetrator, removed her contact and decreased her use of social media, which constructs cyberspace as being the cause of trouble, and this was the case in many experiences recounted in this study.

In Baker & Carreno's (2016) study, participants also blamed cyber technology for instigating violent behaviours. In contrast, a study by Hopkins et al., (2013) amongst 57 boys and girls aged 11-17 years from the UK recognised that violent behaviour online was associated with a lack of control and accountability over one's behaviour, which challenges the casting of blame onto cyberspace. Hence, it is glaring that there are contradictory findings related to this issue.

It is ironic that through much of Hayley's issues with the perpetrator, she was a 'friend' (contact) on Hayley's Facebook account, depicting that despite conflict and not sharing a good relationship, perpetrators and victims do not easily sever ties online. It could also be related to her wanting to have her enemy under her close watch, which corresponds with the 'Keep your friends close and your enemies closer' principle.

While the prior experience relates to the perpetrator's repulsion towards the victims, in cases like the one below, cyber harassment links to attraction towards the victim:

> **Sasha:** A lesbian was worrying me online to become a lesbian; she told me she loves me. I called her a bitch on her wall on Facebook. I wanted her to stop worrying me. She had no right to report it because she continued to annoy me. She acted like she did not understand what I was saying. (II)

Sasha, identifying herself as heterosexual, stated that she was harassed by a homosexual girl, challenging notions of power differentials being located exclusively within heterosexuality. In contrast, research by Hinduja & Patchin (2009) portrayed that non-heterosexual young women were more likely to be targeted online. In response to being harassed by the perpetrator, Sasha abused the girl using derogatory language as she claims that the girl was coercive and wanted Sasha to conform to her sexual preferences. It is a form of sexual harassment and shows that girls may experience cyber violence persistently. This incident constructs girls as not merely victims, but also perpetrators who do not just accept violence but violate the perpetrator in return. By doing this, perpetrators fail to take into account what En Kwan & Skoric (2013) point out about Facebook having corporate ownership of the content, depicting its double-edged sword nature.

While the girls in Thompson's (2016) Australian-based study amongst 13-year-old girls did not admit to behaving in risky ways online, Sasha is amongst participants who declared her risky behaviour online but also seemed to justify it. This case accentuates what Law et al., (2012) regard as the reversal of roles, as the victim also violated the person who cyber harassed

her, fuelling conflict. I draw attention to a feature of FPS which proposes that individuals are not passive but rather active and have choices about how they position themselves concerning different discourses (Gavey, 1989) as in this case, Sasha positioned herself as challenging homosexual advances made to her.

Many girls reported that girls cyber harass girls and a few participants shared experiences where boys or men perpetrated cyber harassment against girls, suggesting that in this study, cyber harassment is one of the preferred methods that girls adopt to violate girls persistently. Here I discuss a cyber harassment incident perpetrated by a man against a girl:

> **Sofia:** My one friend was harassed by a man online, and the man kept telling her to send sexy pictures of herself. It was a strange older man. She sent the pictures, and when they met, the man raped her. The man testified in court saying she asked for it because she sent those pictures and she travelled to meet him. She felt really bad because this man, made it seem like she asked to be raped. She was sad, and even community members looked down upon her. They regarded her as someone who just goes and meets anyone who invites her. She went for counselling. She went to court as well. The man was arrested. It affected her relationships with boys, as she was not comfortable with them anymore. On Facebook, she stopped posting things because she was scared the same thing would happen again. She lost her dignity, people looked down upon her, and she had no self-esteem.

This incident demonstrates how offline consequences are closely related to online interactions, showing an intertwining of online and offline spaces. The victim being constantly harassed for pictures of a sexual nature by an older man suggests that there are not necessarily restrictions in terms of people who have access to teenage girls online, which creates risky conditions and negative consequences such as rape. In this instance, an older man harassed the victim to send sexy images. Contrastingly, in an Australian-based study by Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith (2013) amongst 33 male and female youth, the researchers found that boys coerced girls into sending sexual images. It brings forth ideas that not only boys perpetrate cyber violence, but men too.

Here again, girls' conduct is under surveillance. Girls' may be asserting their agency in choosing whom to meet. Nevertheless, after such incidents, girls' reputations are ruined, and society in general casts blame on them for being violated and fails to be sympathetic towards

them. This is due to socially constructed norms related to gender biases and stereotypes about men and women, which legitimise harmful notions and promote slut-shaming. Tanenbaum (2015) and Weiss (2010) also state that young women receive blame for being sexually victimised by men, sanctioning abusive behaviour. The victim faced chastisement, and people regarded her as socially undesirable for contravening the traditionally expected norms of femininity, while the man did not necessarily contend with negative reactions. It shows double standards that create gender inequalities. Situations like the one described above are associated with consequences such as discomfort, emotional trauma, social isolation, fear, and harm to the victim's self-worth. This finding differs from findings that Ortega et al., (2012) attained from administering surveys to 5860 teenage boys and girls in Italy, Spain, and England. They identified that victims of cyber violence were less affected by this phenomenon.

This theme analysed data about teenage girls experiencing cyber harassment, which in most cases, was perpetrated by girls, displaying that girls exercise negative power online. It challenges traditionally held gender stereotypes. There was also evidence of girls facing cyber harassment perpetrated by older men, suggesting that cyberspace does not restrict perpetrators' access to victims based on age. Most of the experiences in this theme pertain to romantic attractions and relationships in a heterosexual context. However, cyber harassment is not confined to particular sexualities. The theme that follows discusses participants' assertions that cyber violence stems from teenagers' dating relationships.

6.6 Cyber violence: a feature in teenagers' dating relationships.

The participants in this study seem to accept that cyber violence is related to teenagers' dating relationships. The experiences narrated suggest that mostly girls threaten girls online to protect their dating relationships and defend themselves.

Responding to a question about experiencing cyber violence, many participants divulged that girls threaten other girls because they feel insecure in their dating relationships:

> **Rita:** A boy was chatting to me, but his girlfriend was not happy with this. I knew he had a girlfriend. She is stupid. Our conversations were like hey boo [affectionate term], how are you doing? It did not mean that we dated one another. The girl told me she is going to beat me up black and blue. She in-boxed me on Facebook. I feel like she is not confident and comfortable with herself in that relationship; that is why she did that. She felt that I was a threat to her relationship. I told him what she did, and I told him to stay

> away from me because I do not want to get beaten black and blue. He said our relationship has nothing to do with her, which was true, but I was scared to get beaten. However, he did not stay away from me. It affected me in a way that I got to see that some girls are not confident in themselves. If you [are] confident in yourself, you do not need to fight with people over nothing. I was depressed at the time because she was telling me to stay away from someone who I have talked to from a long time. He then broke up with the girl just for me, and we are not even dating, and that was nice. (II)

Jealousy featured prominently in experiences and explanations of cyber violence amongst teenage girls. Rita viewed the perpetrator as insecure and jealous, which was evident in her threats to assault her physically. In contrast, Draucker & Martsolf's (2010) study amongst 18-21-year-old male and female participants in the USA recognised that youth sent threatening messages to their dating partners online to control them.

Here too, Rita's experience highlights the double standards which exist between boys and girls, whereby there is a policing of girls' behaviour. However, boys are not necessarily treated in the same way, creating gender inequalities in society. Several studies identified the prevalence of double standards in various circumstances (Ringrose et al., 2013; Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Vandoninck & d'Haenens, 2014; Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith, 2013). Against this background of girls holding girls and not boys accountable for problems in their dating relationships, I draw upon a feature of FPS which advocates challenging the binary ways of understanding the world and the blaming of victims to interpret situations in different ways and challenge oppression (Carey et al., 2017).

It is evident that cyber violence is a gendered phenomenon that renders girls vulnerable to emotional and even physical harm by perpetrators. Intimidation from the girl in the case above caused Rita to feel dejected and put pressure on her to distance herself from her close friend. It illustrates that victims feel helpless in certain situations and experience disruptions to their friendships due to the violence they face. Several other cases in this study also suggest that girls endure the negative impact of cyber violence. This finding contradicts findings that Ortega et al. (2012) attained where they identified that victims of cyber violence are less affected by it, which belittles such issues. Rita displays some degree of satisfaction and approval at the break-up of the couple, which constructs girls according to what Thiel-Stern (2008) recognises as girls' investment in cultural constructions such as "mean" girl.

Rita was violated by an individual, whereas Amanda was amongst a few participants who were threatened online by a group of girls:

> **Amanda:** A group of matric girls from school wanted to beat me up for a relationship I had with a boy in school. They called me all sorts of names on WhatsApp. Then I deleted my account and started a new one. They got hold of my number and invited me on WhatsApp. They started chatting then called me all sorts of names, like man-eater. They said I took their boyfriend. I did not know the boy I was dating was one of these girl's boyfriends. He was cheating on me. It played on my emotions because he was telling me that he was not dating her, but they were telling me different things. I became depressed, and I did not want to come to school, but I was forced to attend. My work started to suffer, and I was not concentrating in class. I ignored them. Then I told them to come to me; they never showed up. I let them think what they want. I broke up with that boy. A month later, he was back with that girl, so they stopped their comments. I did not report it to the police. It is like people have different opinions of you. They call you all sorts of names, but they do not know the real you. They think that you are something else. I thought not to go online. I did not want to think about what happened. I still had the same relationship with boys, but with girls, it changed. I did not speak to them much. (II)

Girls perceived as stealing the boyfriends of others were violated online by girls in the form of threats and name-calling to police and regulate their behaviours. It emphasises that socially constructed gender norms shape gendered roles and performances. The current study conflicts with findings from a study by Winkelman, Early, Walker, Chu & Yick-Flanagan (2015) amongst 293 American women aged 18 years and above. In their study, young women reported being threatened online by men, whereas, in the current study, young women like Amanda and Rita received threats not only online but also in offline spaces, from other young women. These findings indicate that young women exercise negative power online. While Amanda wanted to meet the perpetrators face-to-face to clarify the matter, they did not turn up, which shows that cyberspace users sometimes hide and attack from behind online identities. It creates difficulties in identifying perpetrators.

In terms of impact, Amanda faced problems such as betrayal, and her perceptions of girls changed. She internalised negative messages due to being name-called, socially isolated herself, and experienced academic decline. It underscores the negative impact that victims of

online threats face. Researchers also documented in their respective studies that cyber violence results in negative consequences, such as affecting academic success (Wynne, 2008) and social isolation (Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman, & Eden, 2012; Baker & Carreno, 2016).

The experience referred to also reinforces the gendered nature of cyber violence, as Amanda received blame for supposedly stealing a girl's boyfriend instead of the boy who was cheating on both of the girls, possibly by misrepresenting himself as single. Hall, Park, Song & Cody (2010) noted similar findings whereby young men provided false information about themselves online about topics such as relationships, resulting in online misrepresentation. This has the potential to create unwanted circumstances. It harmed Amanda's relationship with girls, yet this was not the case regarding her relationship with boys, despite the boy cheating on her, highlighting prevalent binaries.

Rita, Amanda and Sofia were amongst participants who uttered experiences about threats against girls in connection with their relationships with boys. This incident differs from Rita's and Amanda's, in the sense that theirs occurred behind the scenes (via in-boxing), while the one that follows occurred in the presence of a large virtual and physical audience:

> **Sofia:** My cousin [teenage girl] was involved in a school fight. After the fight, she went and wrote bad things about the other girl on her wall on Facebook. She said that she beat this girl and she will continue to hit this girl the next time she sees her. They were fighting for a boy. They were not friends. My cousin did that because people saw the fight and were saying that she was beaten up. She wanted to show them she has courage and can fight, so she went on Facebook and told them that she hit this girl. The girl reported my cousin to Facebook. My cousin was banned from interacting on Facebook for three months. She was asked to remove those comments. People looked at the victim as being a good girl. (II)

The narration of this experience, like many other cases in this study, reflect that girls are aware of the conflict that occurs online. It is significant since it is an important first step in any intervention to reduce conflict and violence. This finding differs from an Irish-based study by Ging & O'Higgins Norman (2016), where teenage girls expressed that everyone got along online, even though they mentioned that they witnessed conflict online. It is possibly their attempts to downplay what they witness online.

Sofia's cousin antagonised on Facebook, the girl she physically fought with over a boy. Due to the ubiquitous nature of violence, victims may become suffocated by it. Similarly, Juvonen & Gross (2008) and Notar, Padgett & Roden (2013) claim that violation in school extends to cyberspace, which depicts that violence does not restrict itself to particular spaces. Sofia suggests that the perpetrator was intent on proving her strength and ability to fight, challenging traditional notions of femininity. This finding contradicts findings by Robertson (2015), Simmons (2002) and Wiseman (2002) who claim that girls engage in relational aggression as opposed to physical violation. However, it is essential to acknowledge studies which recognised that girls fight physically, such as those by Bhana (2008), Bhana & Pillay (2011), and Forlum (2015), highlighting that girls are agents of violence, which constructs them as not necessarily passive or powerless.

The victim used Facebook's report facility to deal with the matter by reporting the perpetrator's violent online posts, demonstrating her awareness about how to deal with the situation. In comparison, Hopkins et al. (2013) gathered from their study that teenagers were hesitant to report experiences of cyber violence. The perpetrator was required to remove the harmful content and was not allowed to interact on Facebook for a specific period. It suggests that in some instances, there are punitive measures for perpetrators.

The perpetrator's reputation was harmed while a positive image was painted of the victim. Likewise, Gradinger et al. (2012) identified that cyber victimisation led to female victims becoming popular. Hence, this experience shows that while girls are negatively affected by cyber threats, it also contributes to them raising their positions on the social hierarchy. Contrarily, other studies showed that cyber violence contributed to the harming of victims' reputations (Walker, Sanci, & Temple-Smith, 2013; Van Royen, Vandebosch, & Poels, 2015).

In this study, I found that cyber slut-shaming is a dominant form of violence that connects to girls' dating relationships. Participants stated that cyber slut-shaming occurs in boy-on-girl contexts and also in girl-on-girl contexts. Cyber slut-shaming creates possibilities for negative notions about girls' sexual reputations to reach a large virtual audience, where girls are judged and chastised, even by people unknown to them, compared to slut-shaming in physical spaces.

In response to a question about teenage girls' experiences of cyber violence, several participants spoke about boys or men slut-shaming girls. Faith was amongst participants who narrated experiences about boyfriends circulating sexual content online that ought to be private:

> **Faith:** This girl is a friend of mine, she had a boyfriend, and she trusted him a lot. She sent him pictures of herself, like pictures of her in her underwear. After they broke up, he took the pictures and posted them on Facebook. He started commenting badly about her, calling her a bitch. Other boys and also girls commented badly. I think he felt insecure and wanted revenge. She left him for someone else, so he did that. She felt hurt and embarrassed. She deleted her Facebook account. She is always inside the house because people used to laugh at her in public. Her parents swore at her. She got the police involved and got a protection order against him. She went for counselling. She is different now. She is not fun like what she used to be. She is timid. She is not with her boyfriend anymore. With friends, she hardly talks. She probably thinks differently about boys, that they all are the same and cannot be trusted. (II)

Faith's friend was slut-shamed online by her boyfriend whereby he broke her trust by posting sexy images she sent on Facebook, in full view of others, in an attempt to seek revenge for her breaking up with him. Such behaviours of boys related to revenge-seeking and shaming girls for not fulfilling their demands uphold hegemonic notions of masculinity. Likewise, Brizova & Miltnerova (2014) noted that break-ups in relationships led to the circulation of sexting material online to exact revenge, contributing to undesirable consequences.

One of the negative consequences which the victim experienced was being rebuked by others online and her parents for body exposure, colluding with notions that blame girls. However, due to socially constructed gender norms, the reaction is not the same in cases where men and boys expose their bodies online, which is acceptable and expected. This experience suggests that parents do not always provide support to teenage girls to deal with being violated online but blame them for it, which legitimises violence against them.

It appears that the experience had no negative consequences for the perpetrator, but severe effects on the victim. It led to an invasion of her privacy, her being shamed and taunted, and the destruction of her reputation. This points to a gendered impact and irreparable damage resulting from cyber violence. It is a concern as social reputations are important to young people. Owing to the consequences that the victim experienced, she changed her attitude to people and life, isolated herself from others, removed her Facebook account, and possibly homogenously constructed all boys as 'trouble makers'. Teenage girls changing their online social habits owing to the violation that occurred was a common finding in this study.

The slut-shaming experience above is boy-on-girl. However, when I prompted participants about experiences of cyber violence, a large number of them articulated that slut-shaming by other girls was common. For example, Melanie narrated her experience of being slut-shamed by known girls from school:

> **Melanie:** There was a rumour about me that I was pregnant and I aborted it. Girls from school were gossiping about me. I had a boyfriend, so they assumed, but other than that I do not know why. There was a WhatsApp group, gossiping about me. One of my friends from there told me about it. They [girls] said I was six months pregnant and tried to kill the child. They used abusive and vulgar language about me. They called me a bitch. I was sick with flu for two weeks, and that is when they assumed I was pregnant, that is why I was not at school. It continued for a long time, and it only stopped recently. When I came to school, learners were staring at me and gossiping about me. It was so bad because I come from a humble home, and my parents were respected in this community. Their reputation was damaged because the rumour was that I killed my child. Another learner's parent told my dad, and he did not ask me about it. I was not showing, and when you are six months pregnant, you show. My mum said things like this happen because girls that do not like you will gossip about you, put it behind you. We did not make it a big thing out of it. My parents said if we make it a big thing, then people will say we have something to hide. I only told my one friend, who gave me advice. I did not confront the perpetrators. Eventually, they stopped gossiping. Cyberspace is a bad space where gossip starts. I stopped talking to many people. I stopped using social media a lot, just a little I go online. (II)

Being an insider at the school and living within the community, I observed that Melanie spent most of her time at school and out of school hours with her boyfriend. I was also aware that Melanie's absence from school caused quite a bit of speculation, not only amongst learners but also educators, who were adamant that she was away from school due to her being pregnant. I heard insults not only directed at Melanie but also her mother. People considered her to be immoral and claimed that she had promiscuous relationships with men, and therefore a wrong role model to her child. This finding shows people's use of social norms to classify both mother and daughter as socially undesirable. Through such notions, violence is reproduced and sanctioned not only amongst teenage girls but also older women, which reflects that cyber violence does not restrict itself to particular age groups of women.

Returning to the discussion related to the data shown above, in Melanie's case, she was ostracised by girls from school after the circulation of rumours regarding her suspected pregnancy and supposed abortion. It relates to views about her contravening the expected norms of femininity. Melanie, being gossiped about by girls online and offline, shows that girls experience cyber violence perpetrated by girls, causing harm to victims in both spaces. On a similar note, research also shows that girls violate girls online (Thompson, 2016; Poole, 2014; Armstrong et al.,; 2014, Van Royen, 2017; Clayton & Trafimow, 2007). It depicts that girls exercise negative power over girls.

Melanie's experience tells us that society polices girls' conduct, and them not attending school for particular periods for various reasons, led to questions being raised about their sexuality and pregnancy, portraying gender stereotypes. From their Belgium-based research amongst boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18 years, Van Royen, Vandebosch & Poels (2015) contend that displaying one's body online led to surveillance of girls' conduct and gossip about them, contributing to slut-shaming. It emphasises that slut-shaming is a product of several issues. I draw attention to a feature of FPS which assists us in identifying how people negotiate their values, personal beliefs and practices (Aston, 2016), as shown here, girls use socially constructed norms to classify and label girls.

Melanie's parents colluded with notions that responding to rumours or taking action against perpetrators may fuel trouble or gossip. Hence, they refrained from reporting the matter, not necessarily providing a choice to the victim, in that way mishandling the situation and condoning violence. In a similar light, Strom et al. (2012) maintained that teenagers regarded cyber violence as a challenge, but parents underestimated the issue. It was positive to note that peer support was useful to Melanie. However, the violence she experienced caused her to isolate herself from others in person and cyberspace due to shame, disdainful perceptions of cyberspace, and mistrust of people. Baker & Carreno (2016) and Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman & Eden (2012) also linked cyber violence to the consequences of isolation which was in several cases in this study.

Melanie's case relates to teenage pregnancy, which related to teenage sexuality, as a reason for being slut-shamed. Policing of a teenage girl's sexuality was also the focus in Manuela's account:

> **Manuela:** I used to post about my life and my feelings. When I fought with my boyfriend, I used to post on Facebook and say I am done with you. As time went by, they [teenage girls] took all these things and fired back at me with them. They told me my life is like this, I dated this one, now I am with that one, and I know these things but to hear about it from them is hurtful. They said I am cheap and loose. They commented on my pictures and said I am ugly. That put pressure on me because every time I post, I want to post something better. The pressure hurts you more when you cannot reach what they want you to. Girls, when they feel you are better than them; they say bad things for you to feel low about yourself. I felt left out, ashamed and alone, in my world. I did not talk to anyone; I tried to understand it myself: how are they helping me with what they are doing? I just ignore them and do what is right for me. I deleted the comments, but I did not report it or confront them. I felt that no one should be treated that way. I felt that it is a space where we get much negativity. I do not post most of the time now. I do not share my life with people in cyberspace anymore. (II)

Living in the community where I administered this research, I understood that Manuela lived in a home where they lacked many necessities, but she had a mobile phone. Payne (2015) also recognised that such is the case in our South African context, where lacking necessities does not suggest a lack of access to technological devices.

Through the creation of the Facebook group for data generation, my observations of Manuela's conduct allow me to point out that she regularly posted updates and photographs related to herself, even sexy images, depicting evidence of her agency. However, at school and in classes, she was very withdrawn, isolated and reserved, reflecting how online identities differ from offline conduct. She posted pictures of herself to validate herself and to raise position on the social hierarchy, emphasising that social reputations are important to girls. However, she suggests that teenage girls condescendingly responded to her posts by judging her choices and actions, criticising her appearance and slut-shaming her. She homogenises all girls as critical and excluding those who do not meet their criteria. This finding displays gendered issues such as the surveillance of girls' appearance and conduct. Earlier in this chapter, I analysed data about girls' looks being policed by girls, which suggests that this commonly prevails amongst teenage girls, in different scenarios.

The incident resulted in Manuela blaming herself for cyber violence being perpetrated against her, as she often posted about her relationship and her emotions. I noticed evidence of victims internalising self-blame in some of the experiences that participants narrated in this study which is related to stereotypical gender norms. Initially, she experienced shame, isolated herself from others and did not report the matter. Eventually, Manuela ignored the perpetrators, had an unfavourable opinion of cyberspace and changed her social habits. A common finding in this study was that teenage girls' online social habits altered after being violated, which makes visible that they viewed cyberspace as problematic as opposed to the negative online behaviours. However, they also took steps to minimise its harmful effects.

Many of the experiences suggest that girls are slut-shamed either by strangers or known people, not necessarily friends. However, the case below was amongst situations where female friends slut-shamed the victim:

> **Nomvelo:** Mam, we were planning to go out as friends, so there was a certain amount of money (R200) we had to put in. The money would still be short, so one friend said she would put in R500. The others got jealous and said that she has a sugar daddy. They posted a picture of my friend. They edited it and made her look old. They posted silly comments about her. They said she has blessers (older men who date girls and are ready to give money and gifts) and that is why she is like that. They sent it to people on Facebook. She started bunking school for a week and then the following week we heard that she drank paraffin. She felt embarrassed and could not face everyone. She tried to commit suicide in August 2017. She wrote a letter about why she was doing that. The police called the girls who posted the picture and gave them a protection order to stay away from the girl. If they do it again, they will be in trouble. They were given community service to clean the school. Mam, the perpetrators, were very proud of themselves. They did not see anything wrong in what they did. When the principal asked them to make an apology in the assembly, it was all fun to them, because they became popular. People did not react badly to them. People did gossip about them, but only for about 3-4 days, then it was over. Her [the victim's] mother was very angry and wanted the girls to be imprisoned, but because they were under 18, they could not be. Mam, she stopped using Facebook and Instagram; she only uses WhatsApp now. Luckily, she survived. Now she is very emotional. It is not like before. She is very

> sensitive and quiet. Her marks have dropped in school. She used to have many friends. Now she only has about two friends. (II)

Here Nomvelo narrates the experience from her perspective. Later in this chapter, I will present Zinhle's account of the very same incident. It becomes evident that teenage girls' accounts of cyber violence are very subjective. However, framing the current study with the theoretical framework adopted, it is essential to recognise that FPS conceptualises multiple positions, gives voice to constructing meaning and considers that social processes and structures shape subjectivities (Weedon, 1997).

Girls viewed Nomvelo's friend as slutty and immoral due to her supposed relationship with an older man and her being willing to spend money on an outing, insinuating her involvement in a transactional relationship. The perpetrators (girls) electronically manipulated images of her and posted them online to shame her, constructing girls as exercising negative power by misusing the nuanced features of cyberspace. The mentioned incident depicts that girls slut-shame other girls stemming from envy related to money and gifts in an attempt to position them as sexually immoral. Differing from this, Tanenbaum (2015) and Poole (2014) affirmed that girls slut-shame attractive girls, to raise themselves on the social hierarchy and to gain boys' approval. It illustrates that envy arises from different scenarios. From this experience, it is evident that girls perpetrate cyber violence against girls who are from their friendship group. This finding coincides with the findings of Cassidy, Jackson & Brown (2009) and Whittaker & Kowalski (2015) that victims are also violated by their friends, denoting that cyber violence does not only stem from enmity.

The matter was reported, and the perpetrators received mainly punitive measures for their actions. In comparison, in research done in the UK amongst 226 female participants by Lewis, Rowe & Wiper (2017), young women who experienced online abuse did not want to report it, as they held beliefs that they would not get justice. While the school attempted to shame the perpetrators for their actions, they gained popularity and admiration, which perpetuates negative behaviour. This finding reflects that perpetrators are lauded for their strength and bravery and get raised on the social hierarchy.

As depicted in the excerpt above, victims experience severe consequences. Nomvelo's friend was emotionally disturbed, isolated herself from others, was deterred from using social media and attempted suicide, to escape the humiliation she felt. It highlights the damaging impact on

victims. Other studies also recognised that cyber violence is associated with negative consequences like suicide (Poole, 2014; Tanenbaum, 2015), emotional distress (Cheung, 2009; Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2012; Mishna et al., 2012; Girlguiding, 2013) and isolation (Baker & Carreno, 2016; Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman, & Eden, 2012). This is a cause for concern.

Nomvelo's friends ganged up on the victim (their friend) and slut-shamed her due to them envying her material status, whereas, in the situation below, Rita's friends ganged up on the victim, who they believed was flirting with their friend's boyfriend:

> **Rita:** This girl knew my friend was dating this boy, but went up to him and asked for his number; she started the conversation. Then we (my friends and I) took the boy's phone, went through his WhatsApp, not because we wanted to see the girl, but we wanted to see the messages. She was sending sexy pictures of herself, heart emoticons, in love face and smiley faces and we were like … this bitch is not good news. After a day or two, we took his phone again; we saw that she was sending him pictures of herself. We went to the boy in person and scolded him. We told him if he did not like this girl's attention, why did he not block her? Then we exposed this girl's picture on Facebook and wrote a caption of her picture saying some bitches like to steal other people's man. We did this because she was talking to someone else's boyfriend and getting too comfortable with him. A few people hated us. Her friends hated us. They thought we were wrong. We said to them we do not care. She did not and would not have reported us, because she should not have even sent nude pictures at all. We felt good. I felt great. A weight was taken off our shoulders. The girl felt bad, and we wanted her to feel bad. She said she was sorry. She asked us to take down the picture. We told her we would if she stops talking to this boy. We could not go to her in person because she was from another school, in another location, but if we had a chance, we would have gone to her in person and asked her if she wanted him, if she did, we would have kicked her ass. My friend called her a whore because that girl sells herself to men, and after that, she wanted to have an intimate relationship with my friend's boyfriend. My friend felt bad for calling her names because that is not our style, but then she felt good because she got to speak out what she had inside her. My friend's boyfriend stopped talking to her for a week because he thought it was unlike her to do that. No police were involved. (II)

Rita was amongst a group of girls who engaged in 'othering' the girl in this situation as 'bitchy' which shows her internalise traditional notions of femininity. She did not necessarily recognise this as similar to what she experienced (which I focussed on earlier in this chapter). Rita was one of the participants in this study who confessed to adopting risky measures online. In contrast, in Thompson's (2016) Australian-based research, none of the participants admitted to engaging in risky behaviours online. It shows varying perceptions of one's conduct online, which may be associated with different social contexts. Earlier on in this chapter, I also pointed out that girls sometimes admitted to perpetrating cyber violence, depicting girls' as not necessarily feeling inhibited to discuss their online conduct.

The victim in this incident experienced name-calling and threats due to claims that she 'stole' one of their boyfriends, which uses the expected norms of femininity to portray the victim in a sexually degrading manner. While Rita and her friends personally approached the boy, they shamed the victim online in the presence of a large virtual audience, depicting double standards that reinforce gender inequalities online and offline. Being slut-shamed placed the victim in a precarious situation, as she could not report the matter due to her having sent sexy images of herself. It would lead to her facing more negative consequences and penalties from social media corporations, in that way blaming the victim for being violated.

This experience reflects that mistrust in relationships spark violence as the perpetrators blackmailed the victim online to ensure that she does not communicate with the boy again. They also reproached the boy in person for their suspicions about his infidelity. A study by Van Royen (2017) amongst 476 Flemish girls aged 12-18 years demonstrated findings that perpetrators use slut-shaming to prevent young women from being unfaithful. Contrastingly, this experience indicates that young women slut-shame young women and also criticise young men for suspected infidelity in dating relationships. It constructs girls as not necessarily fearful or powerless.

The victim apologised for her actions as she possibly internalised self-blame, in that way colluding with notions that she had acted wrongfully and condoning harms against her, such as damage to her reputation. In comparison, the perpetrators held beliefs that their actions were permissible in regulating the girl's behaviour, which reinforces violent attitudes. Similar findings have emerged from studies done by Fanti, Demetriou & Hawa (2012) and Hinduja & Patchin (2009) where perpetrators of cyber violence viewed their behaviour as justifiable. I draw upon a feature of FPS which acknowledges that individuals are not passive but rather

active and have choices about how they position themselves related to different discourses (Gavey, 1989) – in this case, how they position themselves about issues like gender, trust, and relationships. The victim's lack of reporting prevented the addressing of such matters. Furthermore, this renders victims vulnerable to further adverse circumstances and helplessness.

Rita's friends cyber slut-shamed a girl by exposing her photograph online and making nasty comments due to their suspicions about her supposedly stealing their friend's boyfriend. However, Zinhle witnessed the opening of a page about a girl on Facebook, for the same reason:

> **Zinhle:** I witnessed it happening to this one girl from school. A page was opened about her. Girls said she has too many boyfriends. People commented. They said she jumps from one boyfriend to another; she has HIV and saying all nasty and false things about her. Eventually, she was tired of seeing all these things. She changed schools. We will not know who opened that page because it was not opened with a person's real name. If you are on these pages, you will have a bad reputation your whole life. I think it was because of jealousy [that] a girl did that. Also, she stole someone else's boyfriend. However, mam, it is not always the girls that are at fault, sometimes the boy even asks the girl out, but the girl gets into trouble. I did nothing because even if you comment, you will be the next victim. It affected me badly. If I were in her shoes, I would have done the same thing or even committed suicide. (II)

Zinhle observed the slut-shaming of a girl and found it shocking and disturbing. The slut-shaming arose from perceptions that the girl was promiscuous; therefore, having contravened norms of femininity. This finding shows that cyber violence has the potential to affect not only the perpetrator but also the virtual audience. Here, the bystanders' reactions were mixed. Some bystanders inflamed issues further while some like Zinhle were afraid of showing their disapproval of the actions of the perpetrator due to revenge-seeking. Shultz, Heilman & Hart (2014), who did research in the USA amongst 149 male and female respondents aged 18-27 years also recognised that bystanders responded to incidents online in different ways. Some wanted to end the violence indirectly, some intervened offline, and a small number of participants joined the perpetrators as they held beliefs that cyber violence was entertaining and fun, thus inflaming issues. Bystander behaviours are socially constructed and are not neutral.

According to this experience, the use of a pseudonym can be a hindrance in detecting the real identity of the perpetrator, as the Facebook account was opened using a fake name, thus perpetuating higher levels of violence against victims. Hence, it is evident that identities are not fixed but shifting. Zinhle suggests that jealousy is a contributing factor as the victim "stole" a girl's boyfriend. It illustrates a policing of girls' conduct and stereotypical assumptions of them, leading to the tarnishing of their reputations. However, the boy concerned did not face similar negative attitudes towards him, in that way, holding girls accountable as opposed to boys, propagating gender inequalities due to double standards. These binaries exist due to social and cultural norms, which influence the portrayal of women and different gendered expectations for different genders. Reddy & Dunne (2007) identified such issues as problematic owing to different standards held for men and women, which contribute to risky sexual behaviours. Zinhle associates such experiences of cyber violence as placing girls in challenging situations and rendering them vulnerable to severe consequences. One of which relates to educational goals as the victim could no longer endure the humiliation and changed schools which was possibly a coping mechanism for her to deal with the situation. This impact highlights how necessary it is to study cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

The current theme explored girls' cyber violence experiences connected to their dating relationships with boys. Girls threatened girls whom they believed posed a risk to their relationships with boys. Cyber slut-shaming was also a significant feature discussed under this theme as a sexual form of violence perpetrated against girls by boys and men, but mostly by girls who exercise negative power online and subordinate girls. It shows evidence of different versions of femininities enacted. Regarding slut-shaming, all the experiences demonstrate that matters about girls' sexualities are under surveillance, such as relationships with boys, transactional relationships, infidelity pregnancy, and rape. While this is a given even in physical spaces, in cyberspace, it occurs in a more viral sense, intensifying harm to girls' reputations due to them being perceived as immoral and contravening the expected norms of femininity.

The theme that follows focusses on cyber gossip experienced by girls.

6.7 Being in a gossip room: Girls serving a storm of stories online

Cyber gossip was also a prominent form of cyber violence. Gossip refers to spreading false information about people, telling their secrets to others, or circulating negative information about them in their absence. The reason why I provide this definition here is due to this theme focusing on that particular aspect of cyber violence.

Unlike gossip in physical spaces, cyber gossip can be circulated faster and to more people, due to the wide-spread nature of cyberspace. The data suggests that online gossip was mainly a female activity. Gossip in cyberspace was a common cause of violence amongst girls for various reasons. Zinhle narrated one such experience:

> **Zinhle:** I only confronted one girl from school. She gossiped online about me to my friends. Then she said that she came to know that my friends and I were gossiping about her online, that we said she comes from a bad background, she is poor and stuff and takes money from men. We confronted her online, then in school. She started crying. She later drank paraffin and a cocktail of tablets. She was hospitalised. Then we had to apologise. I was furious. She was gossiping about my friends and me to break the friendship and cause tension between us. We went to ask her why she did it, but she denied it. I had to go to court because she had a protection order against all of us, saying we intimidated her. We had to apologise in the school assembly. We were not suspended from school. People said we were bullies, they judged us, but they did not know the whole story. (II)

This account differs from the perspective of another participant (Nomvelo), who was a bystander, and my knowledge of the incident as an educator in the school. In this regard, I believe that being an 'insider', which Mahagan (2016) talks about, proved to be valuable in gaining further insight to enhance the research. In the previous theme on teenage girls dating relationships, I discussed an experience where Nomvelo expressed that her friend, the victim, was slut-shamed in connection with her contributing more money to their outing, causing the victim to become suicidal. She maligned the perpetrators and stated that they were not remorseful about their actions but gained popularity from the punishment they got. Here, I provide Zinhle's account of the same situation, which differs significantly. Zinhle regards her friends and herself as victims of cyber gossip but being accused of gossiping, and were wrongfully punished and judged for confronting the perpetrator. I draw upon a feature of FPS,

which suggests that social processes and structures shape subjectivities (Weedon, 1997). This is evident in the different perspectives from which the participants narrated experiences in this study.

Zinhle confronted a girl online and offline for gossiping about her online but was also accused of cyber gossip, demonstrating the shift of conflict from online to offline spaces. This finding depicts what Thiel-Stern (2008) refers to as girls' investment in culturally constructed identities such as "mean" girl. Furthermore, it suggests that girls experience and perpetrate cyber violence, reflecting that multiple identities prevail online. In Thompson's (2016) Australian-based study, none of the girls who participated admitted to behaving in risky ways online, but they narrated how other girls caused trouble. In contrast, in the current study, Zinhle was amongst participants who admitted to confronting the girl online and in person, due to suspicions of online gossip. It shows that girls do not necessarily deny acts of violence that they perpetrate against other girls but also justify their actions, possibly due to limited fears of reprisal. Zinhle confronting the victim physically and online about online issues led to the victim attempting to commit suicide, showing that there is an intertwining of cyber interactions with offline violence, which heightens violence. In line with this, Litwiller & Brausch (2013) discovered that cyber violence is associated with suicidal tendencies, suggesting life-threatening consequences.

The school principal instructed the perpetrators to apologise for their actions in the school assembly, showing punishment meted out to perpetrators for their actions. It may evoke feelings of shame and judgement, as learners labelled them as bullies. While many of the incidents in this study highlight a lack of redress for issues related to cyber violence, this case demonstrates that, at times, perpetrators have to face harsh consequences for their actions.

Faith shared her experience in response to a question that required participants to narrate experiences of cyber violence that they experienced. While Zinhle was accused of online gossip and confronted the girl (who was neither a friend nor an enemy of hers) online and offline, Faith was amongst participants who were victims of online gossip perpetrated by friends:

> **Faith:** A bunch of school girls created a group chat on WhatsApp when I was ill and spoke about me. They said how I pretended to be sick for attention because I do not get attention at home, and all nasty things, but I do have a medical condition. They were my best friends. Every time I came back to school, they used to walk away and leave

> me alone. One friend was true, she was added to the group, and she sent me screenshots of what was being said about me behind my back. I do not know why they did it to me. I stopped eating because they said that I was getting fat. They picked on my weight, and I had a big bag, so they called me a cow with the cooler box. I stayed away from girls initially and was fearful. I made new friends with boys, and I now have girlfriends who are older than me. I cannot stand immature girls. I went to bed, crying many nights. I used to sit up with my mum, and we spoke about it, she advised me. I feel better now. We did not report it to the police. I did not confront the people who did it to me. Cyberspace is supposed to be about communication, but it has become a gossip room. I do not post as much as I used to. I keep my life private. I do not even comment on other people's pictures because I do not know how they will take it. (II)

During the participant's years at the school I teach at, on several occasions, I witnessed her being critically ill in the form of fainting, severe nosebleeds, and asthma attacks. This experience points out that when girls are away from school, there many assumptions about it. Some of which are false and project girls in a negative light as I also indicated earlier on, in the case related to Melanie. Faith states that her friends gossiped about her online. It proves that cyber violence is not only perpetrated by strangers or enemies of a victim, but also by people from girls' friendship circles who they supposedly trust and have good relationships with, dispelling notions of only strangers causing harm. This is similar to findings by Whittaker & Kowalski (2015), Cassidy, Jackson & Brown (2009) and Jones, Mitchell & Finkelhor (2013), where participants claimed that their friends perpetrated cyber violence against them.

How Faith received information from her friend, who was on the WhatsApp group where gossip about her transpired, is an indication of the nuanced nature of cyberspace features. These features allow users to save, copy and send data, illustrating its double-edged sword nature. The double-edged sword nature of cyberspace also demonstrates that while Faith's friend was able to assist her by sending her evidence of cyber gossip about her, this also infringed the privacy of the members of that group, exposing trust issues and divisions within friendship groups.

Since this incident, Faith became afraid of girls as she probably homogenised them as gossipers. This finding is contrary to reports by Henson, Reyns & Fisher (2013) and Pereira & Matos (2015), where teenagers were mostly afraid of perpetrators who were male and unknown to them as Faith was fearful of girls who she knew. Faith's experience also contributed to her

enduring adverse impact, such as becoming emotional, having a poor appetite, having a negative opinion of girls and cyberspace, and changing her friendship circle. She also isolated herself and was deterred from interacting online, in that way, preventing herself from exercising her rights to participate in cyberspace. Ging & O'Higgins Norman (2016) and Tustin, Zulu & Basson (2014) also gathered that girls avoided online spaces in response to cyber violence, in that way fostering gender inequalities by hindering their rights to interact online. A common feature in this study was that girls avoided online spaces after being violated online, showing that they see cyberspace as a negative space. This finding suggests that their understandings of the causes of cyber violence may be limited.

While some parents remained unsupportive, Faith had discussed her experiences with her mother, who comforted and advised her, showing the lines of communication opening between parents and their children, which is a positive sign. However, studies by Suzuki et al., (2012), Slonje, Smith, Frisen (2013), Mishna, Saini & Solomon (2009), Smahel & Wright (2014), and the International Youth Advisory Congress (2008) found that young people preferred not to discuss issues they experienced online with adults, for various reasons.

The situations that Faith and Niharika relay point out the similarities and differences in reasons for online gossip transpiring:

> **Niharika:** My one friend was close to another girl, so she knew everything about her. She took these stories and told it on our group chat, behind this girl's back. She also spoke badly about the girl and said that she is spoilt because she is the only child; she is not pretty, just intelligent. She was jealous, that is why she did that to the victim. The victim was quite hurt when she came to know about it, so we comforted her, despite us having issues with her [the victim] previously, but we did not involve adults in the situation. We did not want to get the perpetrator into trouble. (II)

Faith's friends gossiped about her family dynamics, her physical appearance, and her faking her health issues. Niharika relayed a situation where her friend gossiped about a girl online in connection with the girl's physical appearance, academic ability, and family dynamics, displaying slight variations in the reasons for perpetrating cyber gossip. This finding relates to findings by Cassidy, Jackson & Brown (2009), where perpetrators violated those who did not 'fit in' in terms of physical appearance and academic ability. Hence, it demonstrates that perpetrators identify particular characteristics of victims to exploit, entrenching violence.

Niharika, being a friend of the perpetrator, did not support her actions when she violated a person who was not on good terms with Niharika and her friends. It shows that despite the rivalry between girls, some girls disapprove of cyber violence. This disrupts notions that girls are naturally mean. However, knowing the severity of cyber violence and being aware of the identity of the perpetrator, Niharika and her friends refrained from reporting the matter, to avoid causing trouble for the perpetrator. Hence, cyber violence continues to be perpetuated, owing to a lack of reporting. While this theme shows participants' perceptions of girls being "mean," this experience emphasises that there is some support for victims of cyber violence, which may assist them in dealing with the issues they face.

This theme focussed on cyber gossip as a form of cyber violence that is perpetrated by teenage girls against teenage girls, positioning gossip as a gendered phenomenon. Cyber gossip is not restricted to perpetration by those sharing a negative relationship with others but also by friends, showing that girls' friendships are also associated with conflict. Gossip topics, as shown above, are mostly regarding family dynamics and physical appearances which are of a personal and sometimes sensitive nature.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented and analysed data on how teenage girls' experience cyber violence. I argue that teenage girls experience, witness and are involved in perpetrating cyber violence in various forms, suggesting that they possess multiple identities. This chapter further argues that in light of cyber violence extending to physical spaces and vice versa, teenage girls are vulnerable to harm not only online but also offline. The next chapter responds to research question 3, on reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

Chapter Seven: Reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter Six, I presented and analysed data related to how teenage girls experience cyber violence. This is the final analysis chapter and focusses on participants' reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls (research question 3). This chapter addresses the 'why' question and draws on data from individual face-to-face interviews and the virtual group discussion.

I present and analyse data about reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls within the following themes:

- **Social contexts foster violent attitudes**
- **Dangers of cyberspace features**
- **Forced expectations to violate online**
- **Online performances of gender**

7.2 Social contexts foster violent attitudes

Considerable research shows how socio-cultural contexts are implicated in violence in physical spaces (Parkes, 2007; Bhana, 2016; Parkes, 2015; Astor, Meyer & Behre, 1999; Dunne, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Epstein, Kehily, Mac an Ghaill & Redman, 2001). The data generated in this study show that such contexts also contribute to violence in cyberspace.

When I questioned participants about the reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence, some mentioned that social contexts influence cyberspace users to violate girls:

> **Nolwazi:** Some people perpetrate cyber violence against girls because they come from a background where abuse happens; even being angry is seen as normal. (II)

> **Faith:** People who come from abusive homes violate girls online. (II)

Participants were aware of the context of violence within which they lived and the impact of social contexts on violent expressions. However, they took this to be normal and did not question it. Such views normalise acts of cyber violence and remove the accountability of people for their actions by attributing cyber violence to contextual issues alone. However, this

also means that it is not possible to address cyber violence without addressing the broader underlying socio-cultural factors that cause violence in all spaces. The comments made above indicate that violence in physical spaces breeds violence online, highlighting that physical violence and cyber violence are not isolated from each other. It underscores both a causal relationship between the two and also a translation between the contexts. I draw upon a characteristic of FPS which assists in the identification of how people negotiate their values, personal beliefs and practices (Aston, 2016) such as how socially constructed norms influence people's choices to violate others and sanction violence.

In this theme, it is evident that the participants held beliefs that occurrences in physical spaces have a bearing in cyberspace, which can adversely affect cyber interactions. The theme that follows explores how particular features of online spaces facilitate cyber violence.

7.3 Dangers of cyberspace features

This theme analyses teenage girls' explanations of how risks emerge from the nature of cyberspace features. The dangers resulting in cyber violence, which I discuss in this theme, are exclusive to cyberspace and differ from the perpetration of physical violence.

Many participants explained that cyberspace provides perpetrators, who may be strangers, with access to victims:

> **Niharika:** I feel it [cyberspace] is dangerous because unknown people send requests and young girls accept it, not knowing the consequences to their actions, which they assume to be harmless. (VGD)

These circumstances arise due to people with dangerous intentions having access to girls. This finding illustrates the intertwining of cyberspace features with particular online conduct. The view presented here suggests that girls lack knowledge about the choices they make regarding their online behaviour. In chapter five, Siphosethu also alluded to teenage girls being unaware of particular dangers online. It reflects that some participants homogenise all girls as lacking knowledge about online risks which is not necessarily the case. Social networking sites like Facebook allow only people of a certain age to join and therefore assumes that users that join are knowledgeable about online risks which reflects the complexities related to cyber applications. In comparison to the findings shown above, in studies by Oduaran & Okorie (2016) and Thompson (2016), participants reported that young women possessed an awareness of risks in cyberspace. Hence, they should not be regarded as misinformed either.

Many participants ascribed the violation of girls in cyberspace to the potential of untruthful virtual identities and interactions:

> **Niharika:** Boys invite girls, even anonymously, act friendly ... too friendly, they keep annoying you, they do research about you, hack your account. (II)

> **Amanda:** Girls are violated because of boys' fake profiles. (VGD)

According to the participants, features associated with cyberspace, such as anonymity and the creation of fake profiles, enable boys to invite girls and portray themselves as harmless. This leads to risks such as invasion of privacy. The gendered way in which cyberspace features are used and misused is also identifiable here. However, some researchers identified that in certain instances, victims of cyberbullying sometimes knew the identity of the perpetrator (Oosterwyk, 2013; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Payne, 2015). It is an indication that anonymity is not exclusively responsible for cyber violence. Hence, it is evident that online identities are fluid and allow for users to create profiles using particular details which may either be fake or real.

Several participants associated cyber violence with not being able to maintain privacy online:

> **Asanda:** Girls post their details; that exposes them to being troubled by perpetrators. (II)

Features of cyberspace allow users to show their details online and utilise or refrain from having privacy and security settings which reflect the nuanced nature of this platform. Asanda is amongst participants who felt that girls' online exposure of their personal information is risky and 'inviting' harms such as surveillance, causing perpetrators to feel powerful. By making such statements, participants also internalise traditional gender norms and expectations and cast blame upon girls for being violated. In comparison, participants in other studies gathered that boys and girls providing too much personal information online placed them in risky positions (Livingstone et al., 2014; En Kwan & Skoric, 2013). I draw upon a feature of FPS, which suggests that individuals are active, not passive. They have choices about how they position themselves concerning different discourses (Gavey, 1989) like in this instance, the choices that girls make about how to construct their online identities and how the reactions to it relate to socially constructed norms.

Participants spoke about the technological manipulation of images:

> **Asanda:** Even people who Photoshop violate girls, they also get time to log on and observe girls often. (II)

As mentioned in previous chapters, photoshopping images distort the actual image of individuals and in many cases, project a negative image of those reflected in the picture. Participants claimed that technologically manipulating images and observing the online activity of girls (commonly referred to as trolling) predicted cyber violence, illustrating here also the evolved nature of cyber features that perpetrators misuse. It renders girls vulnerable to negative consequences, such as the invasion of their privacy and being under surveillance. Girls also face risks related to their identities and harm to their reputations.

This theme examined teenage girls' explanations of the relationship between certain cyberspace features and cyber violence. They were aware that although social networking sites, like Facebook, have some security features that aim to protect users, cyberspace features provide a particular space where known and unknown people may violate girls. The theme that follows discusses girls' reasons for online violation of others.

7.4 Forced expectations to violate online

This theme demonstrates the reasons that girls state for violating others.

When I asked participants why cyber violence prevails amongst teenage girls, many of the teenage girls in this study stated that there was an expectation for cyberspace users to engage in cyber violence. Their experiences showed them that to participate in that space, required showing strength through abusing others.

> **Nomvelo:** Mam, my classmates made comments about me on Facebook; they said [that] I am a coward for not perpetrating cyber violence. They said that I act like a saint. (II)

> **Nolwazi:** Some look at me like I am a fool. Some think that because we do not want to violate others, we are not cool; they do not want to join us. (II)

> **Siphokazi:** They call me a Barbie or sissie, meaning I am like a little girl. (II)

Participants who did not perpetrate cyber violence were viewed as unworthy, weak and therefore ridiculed in light of their choices. This highlights evidence of contempt for those who steer clear of such acts. The words "little girl" in Siphokazi's utterance refers to girls who do not perpetrate cyber violence as not having attained adult status, in that way, undermining them and treating them with disrespect. Nolwazi's comment illustrates that girls who do not want to engage in cyber violence face exclusion from their friendship groups. Hence, where there are negative perceptions of teenagers in light of their particular choices, they may choose to engage in violent behaviour online to gain acceptance, as social reputations are important to them. This finding is contrary to the findings of Miliford (2013), who researched eight young women from Canada and found that society expected young women to be safe, private and ethical online, and to gain social capital. This can be attributed to varying socialisations and attitudes to violence.

In the excerpts quoted above, the girls mentioned that they felt condemned if they did not participate in the online abuse of others. Some girls indicated that they felt pressured by their peers to perpetrate cyber violence:

> **Siphokazi:** I get peer pressure from my friends that I do not do bad things like what they do on social media or talk the way they do. (II)

> **Kaylee:** I do not have to follow my friends, but I may lose my friends if I do not do what they do. (II)

These girls were amongst participants who claimed that they felt coercion from their friends to behave negatively online, or face exclusion from the peer group. These findings highlight a lack of seriousness towards severe issues like cyber violence and regarding it as a trend to harm others online, propagating aggressive behaviour. It is contrary to common beliefs about the association of friendship with support and care for one another as here it is suggested that some teenage girls are undermined and isolated by their friends for rejecting violent notions. I draw upon a feature of FPS which facilitates the interrogation of boundaries that exist and how they operate, as some boundaries can be coercive and force people to conform to particular norms (Carey et al., 2017). In this instance, girls feel trapped about whether to reject violent notions from their friends where they risk being isolated, or conform to particular requirements to receive the acceptance of friends. While some participants in the current study associated engagement in cyber violence with gaining support from their peers, Ubertini (2011) and

Calvete, Orue, Estevez, Villardo & Padilla (2010) associate support by peers with low rates of cyberbullying, emphasising that peers may not necessarily influence the actions of their peers negatively.

According to Asanda, choosing not to perpetrate cyber violence is risky:

> **Asanda:** I could get cyberbullied because people see girls who do not bully as weak. (II)

The comment above emphasises that some teenage girls feel threatened by those who regard them as defenceless and easy targets. This finding depicts that perpetrators exercise negative power by violating girls based on particular assumptions about them. Here too, teenage girls, in an attempt to protect their image or prove their strength, may collude with violent notions by undertaking socially unacceptable practices. It supports the findings of Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., (2014), who claim that perpetrators use cyber mediums to violate someone who possesses less power than themselves, pointing to power imbalances that prevail online.

The current theme discussed the challenging positions that teenage girls are placed in regarding their social statuses and friendships, in response to them making choices not to perpetrate cyber violence. It seems as if online spaces are spaces where girls are expected to demonstrate their power through bullying others, and the way to protect themselves from being bullied is to become a bully. The theme that follows presents and analyses data about online performances of gender, which stem from socially constructed gender norms.

7.5 Online performances of gender

While this is the last theme, it is not by any means the least important. Gender and its performances have been an overarching analysis tool throughout the thesis. This theme explores girls explanations of dynamics related to online performances of gender. Gender was identified as significant in teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence. The social construction of gender posits that men and boys are normatively socialised to be dominant, while women and girls are socialised to be passive and subordinate to males (Connell, 2000). These constructions have implications for teenagers' online interactions and experiences.

Questioning participants about why cyber violence prevails amongst teenage girls led to them sharing their perceptions that girls are weak:

> **Hlengiwe:** Girls are fragile and sensitive, so they get hurt easily. (VGD)

> **Zandile:** Because girls are sensitive and they cannot defend themselves. (VGD)

Such responses point to participants' alignment with and internalisation of constructions that position girls as defenceless and vulnerable to violation. Hlengiwe and Zandile speak of all girls, thereby constructing girls homogenously according to gender stereotypes and biases and position girls as lacking the ability to take control of their online safety. Such notions also collude with normative constructions of femininity that position girls as naturally weak and therefore normalises violence against them. Contrary to participants' views here about girls being helpless victims, research by Thompson (2016), Ging & O'Higgins Norman (2016), and Kernaghan & Elwood (2013) showed that girls were responsible for hurting the feelings of other girls and causing trouble online. Their research suggests that girls are not necessarily powerless victims as they also engage in perpetrating online violence.

Here also, participants classified girls according to stereotypical understandings of femininity:

> **Nolwazi:** Most people think it is easy to cyber violate and abuse teenage girls as they [perpetrators] feel girls are emotional. (VGD)

> **Hlengiwe:** You can say one thing to a girl online, and you can break her down. Girls are emotional. I am not sure if boys are happy when we are crying. They make us feel pain, it is not just physical, and it is also emotional pain. (II)

> **Tyra-Lee:** Boys know how to take advantage of a girl online, especially play on their emotions. (II)

> **Alisha:** Girls are soft, keep it to themselves and internalise it. (II)

Participants shared their beliefs about girls being emotional, which lead to boys exploiting them. It shows girls drawing upon essentialist understandings to state why they think girls experience cyber violence. This constructs girls homogenously according to gender stereotypes and normalises such social discourses. By the remark that Hlengiwe makes, she draws attention to the different forms of harm that girls experience, which she suggests, brings about

contentment amongst boys. Hlengiwe and Tyra-Lee collude with normative constructions of masculinity that construct boys homogenously as violent and insensitive beings.

All participants maintained that girls are violated mainly by boys and men online due to male power:

> **Londeka:** Boys think they are superior to girls, they think that they can do anything to girls online, they think you are a wife to them; you will always be by their side and do anything for them. (II)

Londeka mentioned that boys position themselves within hegemonic versions of masculinities, regard themselves as superior to girls and that they think that girls have to accept boys' negative online behaviour. This finding shows her awareness about assumed male power and the positioning of girls in a subservient way which leads to girls being mistreated and undermined online. Furthermore, her comment suggests that she questions boys' beliefs in their superiority rather than accepting it, in that way, challenging dominant gender norms which foster gender inequalities.

Several participants shared the view that boys perpetrate cyber violence against girls by speaking inappropriately:

> **Zandile:** I do not talk to boys online because they are irritating, and they tease girls. (II)

> **Tyra-Lee:** Boys make girls feel bad and out of place. They do not even know how to talk to girls properly on Facebook. (VGD)

Participants stated that girls experience discomfort online because boys do not speak to girls appropriately. Tyra-Lee said that there are specific ways that girls need to be spoken to, suggesting that she conforms to conservative notions of gender that position girls as delicate. These types of constructions perpetuate gender inequalities. Zandile, on the other hand, seems to both align with and challenge normative constructions. She sees boys as being naturally problematic, and she exercises her agency by choosing not to interact with boys because of how they conduct themselves in that space. It suggests that girls may also avoid online spaces due to the discomfort they experience, resulting in particular gender divisions online.

Studies done in physical spaces too show that girls face name-calling from boys who call them demeaning names (Morojele, 2009), suggesting that some acts of violation occur not only in physical spaces but also online. Such actions also stir anger within girls and repulsion towards those boys in general. In comparison, in Thompson's (2016) Australian-based study, participants claimed that girls caused problems online. The researcher stated that girls used foul language, called girls names and spoke rudely, leading participants to believe that girls their age can be mean. It shows girls exercising negative power online.

Participants felt that cyber violence against girls by boys was normal performances of masculinity:

> **Akira:** When a boy compliments a girl, she feels good. Boys are smooth talkers; they talk nicely to you online but have ulterior motives like hurting you. (II)

Akira suggests that girls can be gullible, and because they are dependent on boys' attention and approval, they compromise their safety. She positions girls and boys in normative ways without question.

> **Lisa:** Boys post bad stuff about them [girls] on their wall. When other boys see stuff like that, they join in. Some boys do it because they may have a bet with other boys and they get money out of it. Some like to do it as they will be someone cool and think that it is fun to do something bad to a girl. (II)

Lisa suggests that boys sometimes join each other in abusive behaviour towards girls. This seems like a "game" amongst boys for them to benefit financially by winning bets and paint a macho image of themselves, entrenching hegemonic masculinities. Perpetrating cyber violence against girls is not merely an act committed by individuals but also in groups, as boys aim to gain power and elevated status. It compounds matters and renders the victim vulnerable to severe humiliation and emotional distress. Comparatively, Thompson (2016) researched Australian girls and found that girls were mean to others online to become popular, depicting that girls reject conservative gender norms and exercise negative power online. The findings above suggest that boys became popular when they perpetrated cyber violence against girls. However, Gradinger et al., (2012) recounted that girls who experienced victimisation online became popular, which perpetuates ideas that violence is justifiable.

A large number of participants expressed that stalking of girls by boys was common:

> **Zandile:** Boys bully girls online and think they can do anything to us. Boys mostly make girls feel bad and stalk them. (II)

> **Hayley:** Boys are more the stalker type. Girls get invites, even from boys overseas, and accept the invites from these strangers. (II)

These findings link to the experiences of cyber violence that I discussed in Chapter Six where girls spoke about boys stalking girls online and girls being propositioned by males from abroad, depicting that there are not necessarily restrictions about access to girls online. It also demonstrates that boys wield power over girls in cyberspace by coercing them and stalking them, depicting the use of cyberspace to uphold hegemonic masculinities. Actions such as stalking girls may contribute to invasion of their privacy and possibilities for physical violence, which entrenches risks. However, Alexy et al. (2005) reported that more young women cyberstalked than young men, suggesting that young women exercise negative power online. It is evident that cyberstalking is an evolution of a crime that prevails in physical spaces (physical stalking), which makes victims fear for their safety and experience psychological turmoil (Elder, 2014). These findings show that violence takes a variety of forms and extends to a variety of spaces.

Participants voiced that boys misperceive girls' posts and make assumptions about their sexuality:

> **Kim:** The way girls post sexy pictures of themselves, maybe they are innocent in their intentions, but boys do not see it that way. (II)

> **Lisa:** Boys take advantage over some girls because if they see a girl posting a picture dressed in a certain way, like wearing a half top, they take it the other way, like the girl is fast, and they have other intentions, but the girl just posted the picture. (II)

Girls post sexy images of themselves online, which is a common phenomenon that highlights their agency in constructing their online identities. Similarly, studies have shown that girls post or send sexy images of themselves (Ringrose et al., 2013; Mascheroni, Vincent & Jimenez, 2015). As stated above, boys harshly judge girls' online posts which show that girls' online conduct is under boys' surveillance. It illustrates that boys impose socially constructed norms

to determine how girls should dress and conduct themselves. Hence, it is evident that cyber violence is grounded within stereotypical gender roles and identities that foster gender inequalities and place girls in vulnerable positions. These participants felt that girls had a right to express themselves freely online, but they receive judgement for it. This finding was a move away from Brandes & Levin's (2014) research amongst Israeli girls where respondents felt that it is common knowledge amongst girls that girls who post sexy photos of themselves online were inviting criticism. It indicates their disapproval of such conduct and legitimises violence against girls by using gender norms to classify those girls as socially undesirable.

Many participants claimed that double standards contribute to online violation of girls:

> **Nomvelo:** Mostly, boys do not post half-naked pictures like girls, and even if they do, they do not get the same judgement. (II)

> **Faith:** If a girl puts something up, she gets judged for it, but if a boy does it, he is seen as cool. If a boy posts a picture of him drinking alcohol, he is seen as cool, but if a girl does it, it becomes a problem. (II)

These utterances suggest that there are different reactions to boys' and girls' online posts, which stem from stereotypical gender norms for boys and girls. Girls are judged and criticised for particular posts which paint them as immoral, like posting their sexy images or images of themselves drinking alcohol. At the same time, boys do not necessarily receive negative judgement. It highlights the policing of girls' online conduct and the double standards that prevail. Such reactions reinforce normative constructions of masculinity and femininity and perpetuate gender inequalities. Many studies, such as work carried out by Ringrose et al., (2013), Vandoninck & d'Haenens (2014), and Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith (2013), recognised double standards related to girls' and boys' sexual behaviours.

The current study identified double standards not only related to sexual behaviour but also other aspects of contravening expected norms of femininity (such as drinking alcohol), which society uses to classify girls as socially undesirable. Bhana & Anderson (2013) and Martin and Muthukrishna (2011) also gathered from their studies that girls' conduct in physical spaces is under surveillance. Hence, it is noticeable that the particular classifications of girls are not limited to specific spaces.

Many participants voiced that boys violate girls by circulating material which girls privately sent to them:

> **Akira:** Many young girls make the mistake of sending inappropriate pictures and videos (nudity), which goes viral. Girls are very kind, mam. Especially if you have a boyfriend, then you want to do anything to make him happy. Boys force girls. (II)

> **Amanda:** Boys make comments about girls and share with their friends the sexy pics you sent, then you trend for the wrong reasons. (II)

There are expectations for girls to accede to boys' requests and send sexy images and videos of themselves online to boys, showing girls conforming to expected norms rather than contesting it. It also highlights the underpinning of male power by attitudes of self-entitlement. Akira uses the word "mistake", and Amanda uses the word "wrong" which reflects their disapproval of girls' behaviour regarding the sending of sexual material online and is linked to them internalising traditional notions of femininity. Hence, it suggests that some girls believe that girls should not conform to boys' expectations of them. The material girls send to boys is meant to be treated with discretion, yet boys often circulate it to others, illustrating insensitivity and the rupturing of girls' rights to privacy. However, a study by Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith (2013) showed that some young men felt that expecting young women to produce and send sexy material of themselves is wrong, offensive and embarrassing. It shows their condemnation of such practices. Therefore, it is important not to classify all young men as perpetrators of cyber violence homogenously.

A common reason that participants stated for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst girls was the sexualisation of girls:

> **Kim:** Girls get targeted because they are viewed in a sexualised way by boys, so boys sexually harass girls in cyberspace. (II)

> **Tyra-Lee:** The way boys act to girls and make girls feel uncomfortable online, especially to girls who do not like it. Like how they talk so rudely and flirty, they ask a lot of personal questions. They try to be macho. (II)

Participants explained that boys sexualise girls, leading to harassment in the form of what Tyra-Lee described as flirtation and prying into girls' private lives, which some girls disapprove. In Chapter Six, I also pointed out that boys sexualise girls online, which suggests that it is a common phenomenon that girls encounter. Such findings emphasise how boys conform to traits of hegemonic masculinity and expect girls to conform to their demands, in that way, subordinating girls. Contrastingly, Renold & Ringrose (2011, p.391-392) claim that teenage girls are "knowledgeable, savvy navigators of a contemporary toxic sexual culture," positioning them as agentic. In physical spaces, boys also sexualise girls and sexually harass them (Keddie, 2009; Prinsloo, 2006; Morojele, 2009; Hlavka, 2014; Forlum, 2015). This suggests that some forms of violence are not restricted to cyberspace or physical spaces only.

In addition, participants suggested that boys often treated girls as sex objects:

> **Minenhle:** When boys first get your number and communicate with you, we think of it as friendship, but they come with other intentions like they tell you they like you, the sexy pics of you are good, and they want more pics. (II)

> **Melanie:** Boys want only one thing from a girl which is sex; they try to get girls' pics on social media and then take things further. (II)

According to Minenhle and Melanie, boys do not merely seek girls' friendship online; but they have a hidden agenda. Boys demand not only sexy images of girls but also have further expectations of a sexual nature. This places girls in precarious situations and creates possibilities for risky sexual behaviour and its adverse outcomes, such as teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection and sexual violation. It suggests that girls' vulnerability to harm is not only online but also in offline spaces. Similarly, Winkelman et al. (2015) observed that young women are sexually solicited and harassed by young men in cyberspace, indicating their powerlessness. However, Ringrose et al. (2012) recognised from their research that girls sent sexy images of themselves in return for money, which shows that girls can also be agentic.

Many of the girls in the study mentioned that boys violate girls who refuse their demands. Some responses were:

> **Faith:** If you do not give boys attention online or you make them feel small, then they try to violate you to make themselves feel important. (II)

Daisy: If a girl does not want to date a boy, he posts things about her to hurt her. (II)

Niharika: When you be friends with these boys, they want more, when you refuse, they gossip about you on social media more than girls. They want to feel great. (II)

Boys often sought the attention of girls online by misjudging friendship as a dating or sexual invitation. Girls are mistreated online if they reject boys' love proposals. These findings demonstrate that girls' choices to deny boys' demands are not respected as boys expect them to conform to gender norms. It renders girls vulnerable to coercion and contributes to boys wielding power by revenge-seeking and emotionally blackmailing girls. Differing from the above findings, Thompson (2016) gathered from a study in Australia that girls made nasty comments about girls, wanted the attention of boys, and aimed to get a boyfriend online, displaying evidence of girls' agency. While studies have depicted cyber gossip as a gendered phenomenon that is perpetrated by girls (Thompson, 2016; Miliford, 2013), here, Niharika drew attention to boys gossiping more than girls. In chapter five, I also focussed on this aspect of not only girls but also boys gossiping, which challenges traditionally held gender stereotypes that position gossip as a female interest.

A frequent observation that participants made is that it is not only boys that perpetrate cyber violence against girls, but also older men:

Sofia: Girls are easy targets to mature men online because they know girls do not have the courage to fight back for themselves. (VGD)

Nolwazi: The men who perpetrate cyber violence go for the young ones because they feel that girls will be more fearful than older people. (II)

Minenhle: I do not know what is happening to us girls, people who hurt young girls are the ones who are supposed to be protecting them. It is an older man who will do bad things to girls online. (II)

These statements suggest that older men perpetrate cyber violence against girls as they view girls as easy to exercise power over, depicting the subordinate status of girls who are dominated by older men. According to Nolwazi, men instil fear in girls, and as Minenhle mentions, they prey on girls, attack, and hurt them. It contravenes traditional expectations of their roles of being protective and caring. These findings are related to findings that emerged from studies

by Henson, Reyns & Fisher (2013) and Pereira & Matos (2015). The scholars found that teenagers online admitted to being afraid of people who were male, strangers, and older, emphasising views that particular people perpetrate cyber violence. However, the discussions in Chapter Six, show that some girls referred to were not necessarily projected as fearful of older men, which show conflicting findings in the data. I draw upon a feature of FPS which relates to how people negotiate their values, personal beliefs, and practices (Aston, 2016), which links with these findings that make it evident that men construct girls as vulnerable and easy to violate.

However, Hayley shared a slightly different view regarding older men violating girls:

> **Hayley:** Girls accept friend requests from strangers, from even older men. They get into trouble. Older men cause problems for girls because they invite girls and want sex. (II)

Hayley suggests that girls orchestrate trouble and are to blame for being sexualised and violated by older men in cyberspace as they accept their invites online, in that way colluding with social norms and promoting violent attitudes. This comment also depicts that girls who accept invites from strangers and older men are not necessarily afraid of them, showing their agency. However, other research (Henson, Reyns & Fisher, 2013; Pereira & Matos, 2015) recognised that teenagers are afraid of people who are unknown, male, or older compared to teenagers online, constructing particular people as creators of risk. While Hayley acknowledges that older men are a threat to girls, she blames girls for allowing men to have online communication with them. Views such as Hayley's fail to consider that men may also be using false information and constructing false identities, and girls may be unaware of this. Hence, blaming girls for being violated removes the responsibility of perpetrators for their negative actions. Hayley portrays girls as agentic in choosing to interact with older men but also blames them for 'inviting trouble' by accepting men's requests online, despite this being risky. In comparison, in Thompson's (2016) study in Australia, girls reported that they blocked strangers and offensive people online, signifying online practices that reject individuals who they view as dangerous.

There was significant evidence of participants' perceptions about girls' extroverted online conduct being amongst reasons for the perpetration of cyber violence against them:

> **Amanda:** Teenage girls are always on social media and posting things compared to boys. Girls who display themselves the most and post everything which happens to them on social media are violated. (II)

Participants stated that time spent online is gendered as girls spend more time online than boys, put their private matters online, and feel the need to display their lives on public platforms. This is important in constructing their identities. Amanda's comment categorises girls homogenously as extroverted. She is amongst participants who believe that such conduct online results in violation, internalising traditional notions of femininity and colluding with gender stereotypes. It shows evidence of victim-blaming, without holding perpetrators accountable for violent behaviour, which legitimises violence against girls. Amanda's statement hints that, in comparison to girls, boys do not post or display themselves online. This is not necessarily the case as boys, too, attempt to construct their identities online. I draw upon a characteristic of FPS which emphasises how social processes and structures shape our subjectivities (Weedon, 1997) as there are particular views about the gendered nature of online conduct which stem from socialisations.

There was evidence of girls policing girls' portrayals online:

> **Akira:** I am on Facebook so I do have many friends (girls) and I see them posting. They like flaunting. They like posing. They post about the clothes they wear, where they are and what they are eating, so they get violated. (II)

> **Daisy:** Girls get violated because of the way they dress or the way they portray themselves online. (VGD)

Earlier on in the discussion, I focussed on how the way girls dress and conduct themselves is misused as an invitation for sexual violation online, showing how social norms elicit particular reactions from people. Here too, Akira and Daisy were amongst several participants who spoke about the policing of girls' conduct online. They pointed out how girls attempt to consolidate their femininities online, such as by portraying themselves as extroverted. These participants demonstrate attitudes that expect girls to keep a low profile and present themselves online in conservative ways. In this way, they perpetuate stereotypes by casting blame onto victims for

being violated, by promoting 'You asked for it' discourses. Hence, such opinions legitimise violence against girls who do not conform to societal expectations.

Many participants directly blamed girls for the perpetration of cyber violence against them:

> **Kaylee:** Girls' posts and captions cause the problem. Things that are not supposed to be online, like they show off and say they are better than other girls. (II)

Kaylee positions herself as objecting to the extroverted ways in which girls project themselves, showing evidence of the policing of girls' online conduct again. She also expresses what acceptable and unacceptable conduct is for girls online. This finding reflects a feature of FPS, which suggests that individuals are active, not passive, and have choices regarding how they position themselves relating to different discourses (Gavey, 1989) as Kaylee directly constructs girls as problematic for such online conduct. Girls also receive blame for becoming victims of cyber violence, as there are beliefs that they not only cause trouble by posting unsuitable content but also attempt to compete with other girls for recognition and popularity. Papp et al. (2015) also stated that young women degrade their female competitors using relational aggression, depicting them defying conventional notions of femininity. Participants in this study spoke about competition amongst girls in detail, and I further discuss this later in the chapter.

A few participants indirectly blamed girls for engaging in transactional acts stemming from online interactions, which led to violence:

> **Sasha:** Girls take money in return for meeting strange men or boys they met online; they end up being killed. (II)

Sasha's view paints girls as materialistic due to them accepting perpetrators' offers of money, which she believes, compromises their safety. It depicts girls exercising power in the formation of transactional relationships with strangers they encounter online. Girls who accepted money in return for meeting boys or men were viewed as unconcerned about risks. In their studies relating to physical spaces, several researchers noted the involvement of young women in transactional relationships, which placed them in sexually risky situations due to promises of money and material things in exchange for sex (Firmin, 2013; Wamoyi & Wight, 2014; Watt, Aunon, Skinner, Sikkema, Kalichman & Pieterse, 2012; Jewkes, Morrell, Sikweyiya, Dunkle,

& Penn-Kekana, 2012; Selikow & Mbulaheni, 2013). It depicts the prominence of transactional relationships.

Participants were aware of homophobic acts online. For example:

> **Rita:** Girls do not appreciate and accept lesbians, so they violate them online. (II)

> **Kim:** Homosexual girls are affected a lot by cyber violence too because girls consider them to be abnormal. Rumours are spread about them. (II)

Some participants held views that girls identify particular characteristics of victims, which they exploit. Homosexuality is one such characteristic, in that way privileging heteronormativity and subordinating alternate forms of sexuality. Failure to conform to socially expected norms results in consequences such as discrimination, chastisement, and gossip, suggesting that girls are under surveillance, which limits their privacy and their rights to exercise their choices related to their sexualities. Similarly, in a study by Hinduja & Patchin (2009), homosexual women were most likely to be targeted in online spaces, due to the degradation of homosexuality. Homosexual beings are also at risk of violence in physical spaces like schools due to a lack of toleration for it from learners (Forlum, 2015).

Participants also mentioned that homosexual girls engage in violating heterosexual girls:

> **Sasha:** Lesbians want girls to be lesbians like them, so they bully them online. (II)

Sasha's assertion here is linked probably to her experience of being violated by a lesbian, which I presented in Chapter Six. According to this comment, lesbians violate girls online to coerce or convince them into becoming lesbians, in that way enforcing homosexuality by putting pressure on them to conform to homosexuality. This is not a common finding and differs from studies which reported that more homosexual people experience cyberbullying than heterosexual people (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Stop Street Harassment study, 2018; Lenhart, Ybarra, Zickuhr & Price-Feeney, 2016; Baek & Bullock, 2014). It shows that perpetrators have particular sexual preferences which create possibilities for the violation of young people who do not want to conform to perpetrators' demands.

When I asked participants about the reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls, a large number of participants regarded gossip amongst girls as a process that leads to cyber violence prevailing amongst teenage girls. In Chapter Five, I focussed on gossip

as part of teenage girls' understandings of it as a form of cyber violence, and in Chapter Six, I analysed girls' experiences of cyber gossip. In this theme, I explore participants' views that girls are the cause of cyber gossip prevailing:

> **Nomvelo:** Girls always fight and gossip online. They are rude to other girls. (II)

> **Rita:** Girls gossip about girls online and have a big mouth which they cannot shut. (II)

The participants stated that gossiping online is a common habit amongst girls, which maligns girls and creates stereotypical assumptions about them. Here, participants mention that other girls gossip online, showing the phenomenon of 'othering'. The views here paint girls as victims of cyber violence perpetrated by girls who exercise negative power online. In Thompson's (2016) study too, girls expressed that other girls gossiped online, indicating the 'othering' phenomenon. Therefore, they should not be homogenously regarded as victims of male violence. Gossip amongst girls also occurs in physical spaces (Forlum, 2015), showing its pervasive nature. It is interesting to note that while, in Chapter Five, I presented girls' understandings that girls and boys gossip, the discussion of experiences in Chapter Six suggests that girls gossip, which reflects that there are varying findings regarding particular aspects of cyber violence.

While the participants above refer to other girls as engaging in gossip online, below Minenhle talks about how she is amongst those girls who do the same:

> **Minenhle:** Girls gossip; when someone puts something up online, we talk behind her back and say what was she thinking putting that up? (II)

Minenhle refers to her actions, amongst others, admits to being critical of other girls' posts and igniting gossip, depicting implicit cyber violence occurring. It represents a policing and regulation of girls' conduct and suggests that some girls do not necessarily deny violating girls, possibly due to limited fear of reprisal. While girls like Minenhle, who participated in the current study, acknowledged their involvement in cyber gossip, girls who participated in Thompson's (2016) study said that other girls gossiped and told secrets online.

Some participants claimed that cyber gossip also prevails amongst girls in friendship groups:

> **Niharika:** We (girls) had problems in the past, they say something, you say something, and they take the messages and show it to others. Your friends (girls) gossip about you,

and it affects you because you tell them everything. After all, you trust them, and they go and tell everyone behind your back. (II)

Cyber gossip creates undesirable consequences such as conflict, mistrust, exposure of confidential information, and disappointment stemming from a lack of respect for others' privacy. It is an indication of cyber violence occurring implicitly. In studies done by Miliford (2013) and Thompson (2016), participants also said that girls gossiped online, showing its gendered nature. Through processes like cyber gossip, girls project themselves differently to people. Therefore it is evident that their identities are not static, but shift and FPS takes into account the fluid nature of identities (Kondo, 1990). Furthermore, as recognised in the current study, girls who participated in Thompson's (2016) research also reported being misused by their friends whom they believed were close to them. This challenges notions about cyber gossip being perpetrated only within a context of hostility since, as shown here, in some instances, friends are the perpetrators.

Participants stated that jealousy is a pressing issue online and a frequent cause of cyber violence amongst teenage girls:

Siphosethu: Girls are jealous of other girls, so they play games to trouble them online. (II)

Kaylee: Mostly, girls cyber violate because I believe girls are jealous of each other, and they try to bring other girls down. (II)

Here too, participants showed evidence of vilifying girls for their online conduct. They align themselves with conventional notions of femininity that see girls as being jealous and unsupportive of each other. Siphosethu claims that being jealous over a girl is a reason to play "games" on her online, rendering her vulnerable to harm. These comments position girls as insecure and wanting to attack girls who they consider to be competing for popularity. The findings above are parallel to findings by Tanenbaum (2015) and Poole (2014), where girls violated girls whom they envy to raise their status on the social hierarchy. This indicates that teenage girls are victims of violence that is perpetrated by girls who exercise negative power online.

Participants also stated competition amongst girls as a reason for cyber violence prevailing amongst teenage girls:

> **Niharika:** There is much competition amongst girls on Facebook. If you see them wearing something you want it, just to fit in and this causes fights online. (II)

> **Londeka:** Girls are competitive. They fight online over almost everything, from clothes to boyfriends, comparing themselves to others and wanting to be like others. (II)

A large number of participants felt that competition amongst teenage girls is a significant issue regarding what girls place value on, such as their appearances and romantic love. They suggested that violence in cyberspace is linked to rivalry amongst girls, making it their prerogative to compare themselves to other girls, feeling pressured to conform to particular trends, assimilate themselves with others, and gain acceptance. It is an attempt to raise themselves on the social hierarchy, become popular and violate girls who they believe, compete with them. Londeka's comment is evidence of her internalising traditional notions of femininity and maligning girls for their conduct online.

Participants viewed issues related to popularity as a cause of cyber violence:

> **Londeka:** When you are popular on Facebook, they call you a Feleb like from the word Celebrity. Like as in a Facebook celebrity. That is when girls attack you. They hate other girls being the centre of attention. (II)

> **Kristine:** On social media, you get popular girls; when they make a mistake, everyone darts at her and targets her. The girls do not stop talking about it. They keep sharing it. They make memes of her. (II)

The findings here reflect that while celebrity life is an integral part of teenagers' lives to keep up with the latest trends, conforming to it is also rejected amongst them. Popular girls are at risk of being violated online in cases where perpetrators feel envious of the admiration that they receive, or when they (the popular girls) have erred. This finding suggests a paradox regarding popularity as popular girls are in danger of being targeted due to girls who want to raise themselves on the social hierarchy by undermining other popular girls. It also demonstrates that girls should not be homogenised as victims of male violence as girls also perpetrate violence against girls online.

Kristine's comment focusses on the creation and circulation of memes to paint particular girls negatively. Memes are technologically modified images and creating and circulating memes that mock girls may result in the material going viral, highlighting the humiliation that occurs in cyberspace. This action may ruin the image of girls not only online but also offline. The views here show the adverse nature of popularity. There was also a particularly negative connotation to popularity in research that was administered by Ging & O'Higgins Norman (2016) where participants communicated that they were not popular and were cautioned to avoid certain popular cliques. These findings about popularity make visible, the double-edged sword effect of being popular.

Many participants associated cyber violence with attention-seeking behaviours:

> **Sofia:** Some girls cyber violate to get attention. They do not realise what they are doing is wrong. (II)

> **Asanda:** Sometimes, girls take the fight that happened in school and then go home, go online and start looking for attention by calling the person names and fighting with them. (II)

Participants held beliefs that some girls are provocative and seek attention by perpetrating cyber violence against other girls, defying conventional notions of femininity. Hence, these participants construct and label such girls as trouble makers and agents of violence online, showing their disapproval of girls' conduct. In Wilton & Campbell's (2011) study involving boys and girls, not only cyber violence occurred due to perpetrators being intent on receiving attention from others but also physical violence, which compounds matters. Sofia's comment suggests that girls perpetrate cyber violence against girls unknowingly, in that way, insinuating girls' lack of awareness about negative online behaviours. This finding contradicts findings by Thompson (2016), who recorded that girls mentioned that they were aware of what is risky, which can be attributed to different socialisations.

Fights amongst girls were particularly about boys:

> **Niharika:** It is all about boys for girls. Girls let boys come between them and cause problems. If a boy dates both friends, then the girls fight over it online. (II)

Issues surrounding dating relationships and envy are intertwined and bring about conflict online. This finding positions girls as preoccupied with notions of love and romance and show the value that some girls place on their relationships with boys. Cheating that stems from such relationships led to girls disparaging girls, casting blame onto girls, and regarding them as problematic instead of boys. Hence, it emphasises double standards that exist and create gender inequalities. Girls also fight over boys in physical spaces (Forlum, 2015); highlighting attempts to consolidate their femininities offline too.

The findings in this theme demonstrate how cyber violence prevails as a result of gendered performances. Some girls in this study sometimes conformed to normative versions of femininities and accepted hegemonic masculinities as normal. At other times, they challenged normative constructions and demonstrated their agency by making choices about their online interactions.

7.6 Conclusion

This analysis chapter explored participants' reasons for cyber violence prevailing amongst teenage girls. Teenage girls who participated in the study believed that both offline and online issues predict cyber violence, showing the interrelationship between those spaces. There are coercive expectations for girls to perpetrate cyber violence, in that way, legitimising violence. Cyber violence is attributed to constructions of masculine, feminine and counter-feminine performances, highlighting gendered notions.

Therefore, this chapter argues that cyber violence is a product of several factors, such as the influence of social contexts, particular usage or misuse of cyberspace features and coercive attitudes that expect girls to perpetrate cyber violence. This chapter further argues that gendered performances online is the most conspicuous reason for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

The final chapter provides a summary of the insights gained from this study, and the implications of these findings, bringing this study to a conclusion.

Chapter Eight: Concluding the study.

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I remind the reader of the key research questions underpinning this study. I then synthesise the main findings of the study. Thereafter, I present the implications of this study to inform the development of appropriate interventions to ameliorate gendered performances related to teenage girls' experiences of cyber violence.

8.2 Key research questions

Through conducting this study, I explored teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them by researching 30 teenage girls from one secondary school in KZN, SA.

The following key research questions underpin this study:

1. What are teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence?

2. How do teenage girls experience cyber violence?

3. Why does cyber violence prevail amongst teenage girls?

I present the main findings below.

8.3 Main findings

I drew on FPS theory to frame this study. The purpose of this study was to explore teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence. FPS provided me with the concepts and tools to achieve this by garnering diverse understandings and experiences of teenage girls within a South African context. These tools include the features of FPS related to multiple identities, multiple power relations and aspects related to language, subjectivity and emphasising human rights. FPS was also a useful tool in analysing data which assists in interrogating the meaning contained in the words of participants.

Many participants spoke about their experiences of cyber violence as victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. FPS is a useful lens, in the sense that it conceptualises multiple positions, assists in constructing meaning (Weedon, 1997), takes into account the fluid nature of identities (Kondo,

1990), and challenges victim-blaming (Aston, 2016). The responses of the participants highlight unequal gender power relations between boys/men and girls online, fuelled by hegemonic masculinities and feminine and counter-feminine constructions. Being guided by FPS enabled me to reflect critically on how these unequal power relations operating contribute to gender inequalities, both online and offline. I, therefore, recognised that teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence are grounded within gendered roles and identities. Many girls conform to traditional stereotypical notions of femininity. However, there was evidence of girls challenging normative gendered constructions too. Some participants reported experiences of taking control of their lives and their safety and supporting each other. Girls also reworked conventional femininity by showing how teenage girls also perpetrate cyber violence.

I now present a summary of the findings of this study according to the three research questions.

8.3.1 Research question 1: What are teenage girls' understandings of cyber violence?

The participants in this study understood that cyber violence involves the use of technological devices and mediums to hurt or be hostile towards others, signifying its damaging nature. This finding suggests that cyberspace is not just a positive space but can foster harm. While the damaging nature of cyber violence may seem obvious, I recognised that teenage girls are aware of this. Participants understood that cyber violence brings about negative consequences, such as fear and insecurity. It alters victims' perceptions of cyberspace and tarnishes their confidence in cyberspace also. In light of such an impact, there was evidence that participants mostly disapproved of cyber violence and viewed it as a severe issue. However, participants believed that their friends and other girls underestimate the issue; in that way indicating that teenagers have varying opinions about what is considered risky. These findings about the different ways in which teenagers view cyber violence such as their aversion to it or approval of it is evidence of social processes and structures shaping their subjectivities.

A common understanding amongst participants was that the nuanced features of cyberspace allow people to spread negative messages about girls, causing them humiliation and ruining their reputations. It must be considered in light of girls' social reputations being important to them and the magnitude of the cyber audience. Participants believed that cyber violence adversely impacts on girls' self-esteem, causing them to internalise negative ideas about themselves, showing gendered impact. Participants also rejected cyber violence as it evokes

many negative feelings such as sadness, anger, mistrust, revulsion, and concern within them, showing several undesirable consequences which participants stated affects not only victims but also bystanders.

Participants possessed understandings about several forms of cyber violence that prevail and consequences thereof, some of which were referred to repeatedly, demonstrating their prevalence. They stated that profanity, inappropriate images, and technologically modified content prevail online, some of which they generalised that teenagers are against seeing online. According to the participants, cyberspace allows perpetrators to circulate private content that could paint victims in a negative light and undermine them, simultaneously granting perpetrators the opportunity to raise their social status. Perpetrators invade victims' privacy as the public has access to one's personal information. Participants stated that they understood violent forms online to include masquerading, online threats, harassment, bribery, and blackmail. These assertions inform us that teenage girls in this study were aware of the various tactics that perpetrators adopt by misusing the nuanced features of cyberspace to violate victims. Some of the harmful content sent may become viral and difficult to erase, placing victims in precarious predicaments. Participants spoke about forms of cyber violence like online denigration of girls, which is influenced by socially constructed gender norms. This form of cyber violence results in the objectification of the female body and places pressure on girls to conform to societal expectations. Participants stated that teenage boys and girls gossip about girls online, which challenges traditional gender norms. Many participants asserted that boys sexualise girls online and coerce girls to send sexy images of themselves which places girls under challenging situations, especially due to them placing value on love and romance. This emphasises the exercise of male power over girls online.

Participants' understandings of the degrees of the forms of cyber violence varied when shown pictures of cyber violence, which can be associated with their observations and experiences online and them inferring beyond the image in some cases, which is underpinned by how they are socialised. Most participants felt that name-calling was the most common form of cyber violence, while some regarded cyber gossip as the most common form which can become widespread due to the sophisticated nature of cyberspace. Name-calling and cyber gossip are related forms of cyber violence, but name-calling can be both implicit and explicit and cyber gossip mainly occurs implicitly. A few participants regarded stalking as the most common, but this is context-dependent. These findings show that teenage girls in this study do not possess

homogenous understandings about forms of cyber violence, possibly due to their experiences online which inform their understandings. Hence, it is glaring that there are multiple positions from which participants respond and FPS conceptualises such positions to construct meaning.

The majority of the participants felt that the worst form of cyber violence was threats of violence. Some participants believed that name-calling was the worst form of cyber violence against teenage girls which they showed their disapproval of as they found it disturbing. Other participants decided that enforcing self-harm, online threats of rape or the meme are the worst forms of cyber violence as a result of the consequences associated with them and the feelings they evoke. Some participants regarded the meme as the worst form of cyber violence due to appearances being important to girls, and this form causes a person's image to be tainted, also considering the longevity of online content. Participants viewed the threats of rape as severe due to it hindering girls' rights to privacy, safety and freedom of movement.

In terms of perpetrator identities, most participants witnessed that known and unknown people perpetrate cyber violence. This is because of several aspects which online spaces permit such as fake profiles and anonymity. However, in some cases, perpetrators do not necessarily feel the need to conceal their identities, possibly due to limited fear of reprisal. Some participants stated that victims who accept strangers' invitations online get violated. On the one hand, this shows that participants regulate attitudes that stereotype strangers and recognise the importance of being aware of the risks that prevail online. They also collude with 'You asked for it' discourses which perpetuate violence. On the other hand, this ruptures ideas that teenagers are fully aware or unaware of cyber risks. Hence, they should not be categorised homogenously as knowledgeable or lacking knowledge. From these findings, it is evident that identities are not fixed online, but fluid and multiple power relations operate simultaneously.

Most participants claimed that mostly male cyberspace users perpetrate cyber violence and girls are mostly the victims, showing evidence of male dominance and the subordination of girls online. This creates unequal gender relations by reinforcing hegemonic notions of masculinities. It is not surprising due to gender norms, which also prevail in physical spaces. Participants shared views that girls are at risk online due to being emotional, drawing on essentialist notions and colluding with traditionally held gender stereotypes. A small minority of participants stated that girls violate girls online using tactics that boys do like swearing and bullying. Girls expressed that girls perpetrate cyber violence by adopting methods such as gossip or criticism about physical appearances and girls' sexualities which link to feminine

constructions. Girls engage in such actions, possibly to raise their social statuses by undermining victims. There were also some contradictions about girls violating boys online, which challenges the dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity by suggesting that boys also experience cyber violence as victims. Hence, it is noticeable that online users' identities are gendered due to socially constructed gender norms.

Many participants recognised a strong link between violence in cyberspace and physical spaces, showing an intertwining between the two. One such example of this relates to girls not being inhibited from contact with strangers online and offline. Participants also noticed that people position themselves differently online and offline and are selective about the image they want to project, showing the fluid nature of identities online. It also creates risks in light of falseness of identity. During the virtual group discussion, all the participants said that online violence leads to offline violence. Participants suggested that this may occur in cases, especially where perpetrators are not satisfied with the occurrences online, so they want to prove a point offline. There were views that, in some circumstances, girls use violence against girls to assert themselves, stemming from the conflict in school. Due to surveillance online, there were greater possibilities for invasion of privacy in the form of monitoring and trolling and acts of physical violence such as stalking and kidnapping. This finding illustrates the tactics that perpetrators use to gain access to victims, endangering their safety. Participants understood that wanting to defend oneself led to violence shifting from online to offline spaces in revenge-seeking situations, depicting the ubiquitous nature of violence and lack of escape for victims.

Violence in cyberspace creates possibilities for offline violence that is associated with fatal, real-life consequences. It also depicts that perpetrators do not restrict the tormenting of a victim to online spaces but also extend such behaviours offline. Participants felt that victims do not passively accept the violence but sometimes respond violently to defend themselves and protect their image, especially considering that social reputations are important to young people. This demonstrates the phenomenon of role reversal online. Bystanders also see such incidents as an opportunity to inflame matters. It causes a cycle of violence which exacerbates risks. These findings highlight that identities are not fixed online but continually shifting due to socially constructed norms. From these findings, I gathered that participants were not ignorant about cyber violence. They understood that cyber violence is damaging and prevails in numerous forms and to different degrees, illustrating their recognition of the seriousness of this phenomenon.

8.3.2 Research question 2: How do teenage girls experience cyber violence?

My research proceeded with the assumption that the participants in the sample were expert sources of information about teenage girls' experiences. Therefore, I did not restrict my questions to their personal experiences of cyber violence. However, the cases that the participants narrated were mostly about their own experiences, suggesting that the girls in this study are personally affected by cyber violence. Some of the experiences that participants relayed were their online observations, indicating that girls are affected by cyber violence as bystanders. Exposure to such incidents have the potential to create fear, discomfort and emotional distress. There was also evidence of positive bystander behaviour which supports victims who experience cyber violence. In a few cases, participants recounted experiences about what their friends have experienced, showing that victims of cyber violence are not always silent regarding what they experience but share their experiences with others. This is possibly an attempt to make their peers aware of possible dangers or to get support from them. Such experiences should be treated seriously also. Sometimes participants may have shared an experience and mentioned it as an experience related to a friend or that which they have observed online but maybe recounting their own experience. Nevertheless, it is relevant to the focus of this study which are teenage girls. In certain instances, participants admitted to being perpetrators, denoting that while teenage girls are mainly victims of cyber violence, they also perpetuate it by exercising negative power online. These findings show diverse perspectives from which the experiences were elicited. Hence, in this study, it is noticeable that teenage girls have experiences of cyber violence in one or more of the following ways: as victims, perpetrators, or bystanders.

Compared to other social media applications, participants mentioned Facebook as a common avenue wherein cyber violence occurs, showing that particular spaces are associated with risk. While I believe that it fitted methodologically to conduct one of the data generation methods in that space, I also acknowledge that these were the findings of this particular sample at the time of data generation. Several other social media applications with different features have mushroomed since then.

In this study, the experiences suggest that boys police and criticise girls' beauty and engage in hacking girls' accounts to ruin their image. Boys also stalk girls, flirt with them and access information about them. This highlights male power over girls, which places girls under their surveillance and requires them to conform to traditionally expected norms.

The experiences posit that girls engage in policing girls' body and beauty, but to a lesser extent than boys do, displaying fluid enactments of femininity. It was evident that girls also perpetrate cyber harassment against girls, make threats of online and offline violence concerning their relationships with boys, and slut-shame girls. Boys and men also cyber harass girls, threaten them online related to their relationships with boys and slut-shame them. It signifies that boys and girls do not necessarily have a uniform approach to perpetrating cyber violence. As mentioned in Chapter Five, despite participants claiming that boys and girls perpetrate cyber gossip, they only narrated experiences about girls perpetrating cyber gossip. This highlights that participants are selective about how they report matters and also that their understandings sometimes vary from their experiences. The most common forms of cyber violence identifiable from the experiences recounted were slut-shaming, harassment and gossip, showing selected forms of cyber violence being preferred methods of violation.

Victims were violated online by their friends, enemies, random people or by unknown identities which suggest that multiple identities prevail online. The nuanced features of cyberspace allow for perpetrators to masquerade to eliminate suspicion of their real identities, exacerbating risks. Some of the experiences narrated reflect that people from abroad have access to teenage girls, also as a result of the features of cyberspace. Cyber mechanisms are also insufficient in preventing risks due to their loopholes, and perpetrators resisting control mechanisms like in cases related to hacking.

A large number of the experiences mentioned in this study occurred in the virtual presence of others, where the virtual audience mostly joined the perpetrator in violating the victim, harming the reputation of victims. Some incidents took place one on one; while this does not necessarily mean a lesser impact, it denotes that in some instances, perpetrators prefer to target victims personally. In terms of the reactions to cyber violence, some victims preferred to remain silent after being violated. At the same time, some chose to retaliate, displaying evidence of rejecting perpetrator's actions. Popularity was juxtaposed in this study as some girls lost their popular status after being violated while some became popular.

I gathered that my participants acknowledged the conflict that occurred online and were open about what they were exposed to, which possibly stems from how they are socialised. There was significant evidence of agency in reporting matters to their parents, the police or school authorities. However, in some cases, there was no redress for such situations. In response to being violated online, many victims chose to become more self-conscious, police themselves,

spend less time online or limit their posts. This is a concern as it hinders girls' rights to interact online. While some victims became more aware of their contacts and interactions, a few deleted particular social media applications, in that way, associating cyberspace with having negative connotations and holding it accountable for negative online behaviour. There was also evidence of self-blame where victims held themselves accountable for being violated. Victims were profoundly affected by cyber violence, and bystanders also felt affected by what they observed online, which is a serious concern.

8.3.3 Research question 3: Why does cyber violence prevail amongst teenage girls?

Having explored teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence, I proceeded to explore what participants considered to be reasons why teenage girls are vulnerable to cyber violence. Participants mentioned that cyber violence prevails amongst teenage girls for several reasons. Some participants claimed that offline social contexts foster violence online, suggesting that people who come from violent socialisations want to violate girls online. This finding shows how socially constructed norms influence participants' understandings. Such a notion also normalises violence, removes the accountability of people for their behaviour and accords blame to social contexts. Being guided by FPS enabled me to gain an understanding of how individuals negotiate their values, personal beliefs and practices related to the occurrences of cyber violence and why they prevail.

Many participants claimed that cyberspace has sophisticated features which provide perpetrators with added opportunities to violate victims. For example, cyberspace grants strangers, even those with dangerous intentions, access to girls online. It depicts participants' awareness of online risks and how it differs from violence in physical spaces. Participants felt that girls who accept invitations from strangers are oblivious of the consequences it can cause, in this way casting blame upon girls for being harmed due to their supposed lack of knowledge. The disclaimers of social media applications are also created in a way that assumes that online users' are aware of aspects related to virtual identities.

Several participants recognised that the false nature of online identities, stemming from boys' fake profiles and anonymity online, is also a reason for cyber violence prevailing amongst teenage girls. This was associated with boys misusing cyberspace to invade the privacy of girls, depicting the gendered nature of online identities. Many participants internalised traditional notions of femininity and blamed girls for exposing their private details online, leading them

to be vulnerable to risks such as surveillance, hacking and masquerading. In light of such findings, FPS is a useful tool which challenges the blaming of victims to interpret situations in alternate ways. A common belief amongst participants was that perpetrators who manipulate images technologically also engage in practices such as trolling which causes harm to victims' reputation and identities. This illustrates particular nuanced tactics that perpetrators employ. Participants spoke about photoshopping of images by distorting an actual image which the sophisticated features of cyberspace permit. These findings illustrate the double-edged sword nature of cyberspace, which must be taken into account when researching violence in such spaces.

Several participants expressed the view that not engaging in cyber violence was risky, because this is received with criticism and ridicule by others, in that way showing contempt for them and promoting violent attitudes. Those who do not perpetrate cyber violence also faced pressure from their friends to do so, or they were excluded from their friendship groups. This finding depicts a lack of seriousness towards issues that cause harm, propagating violence, since those who face coercion may choose to violate online to receive acceptance in peer groups. It illustrates how social norms influence conduct negatively. A few participants believed that girls not engaging in cyber violence creates possibilities for them to be violated online due to the pressure that they face to project particular images of themselves. It is imperative to consider this in light of social reputations being important to young people.

Participants expressed that cyber violence prevails amongst teenage girls as a result of particular feminine traits – such as girls being weak, emotional and sensitive. It classifies girls homogenously according to biological essentialism by colluding with gender stereotypes and normalises discourses which heighten gender inequalities. It blames girls for being violated but also positions girls as unable to harm and causes them to internalise their subordinate roles.

All participants firmly believed that boys violate girls online as they view girls in a subservient way. This suggests that online identities are gendered owing to socially constructed gender norms. Participants mentioned several tactics that boys use to violate girls online, such as by stalking them, speaking to them inappropriately, and using ulterior motives to violate them, emphasising the exercise of male power. Boys also violate girls online by flirting with them, misperceiving their posts and harshly judging them for it. They also circulate private sexy material that girls send, view them as sex objects, harass them and even take bets with their male colleagues to violate girls and gain popularity. These findings illustrate that girls' online

conduct is under surveillance by boys who sexualise girls and use gendered norms to determine how girls should conduct themselves.

While there was evidence of girls conforming to boys' demands, some girls showed signs of rejecting such demands. Participants commented that boys solicit sex from girls and girls get violated if they refuse boys' demands, which shows that there are expectations for girls to meet boys' demands. It renders girls vulnerable to coercion and being blackmailed by boys, entrenching hegemonic masculinities. Some participants felt that in cases where girls rejected boys' sexual advances, boys gossiped about girls and showed the ability to gossip more than girls. This challenges traditionally held gender stereotypes and demonstrates that girls' sexual conduct is under scrutiny.

Participants' views suggested that men also perpetrate cyber violence against girls since they view girls as easy targets, instil fear into girls, and attack and hurt them, which is contrary to what girls expect of them. However, some participants also classified girls as inciting trouble by accepting friend requests from strange men online. This finding is evidence of colluding with notions that cast blame onto girls for being sexualised and violated online, in that way, perpetuating violent reactions. It also removes the responsibility from perpetrators who engage in socially unacceptable practices by sometimes violating girls under fake identities.

A large number of participants disparaged girls for their extroverted conduct online, showing participants internalising traditional gender norms. Participants stated that specifically, girls spend more time online than boys and expose themselves online. It classes girls homogenously as extroverted and colludes with stereotypes that blame girls and cyberspace for creating violence. It also hints that boys do not spend much time interacting online, which is not necessarily the case. Several participants revealed that there are different views of boys' and girls' online posts, showing its gendered nature which reinforces normative constructions of masculinity and femininity. Girls depicted themselves online as extroverted, showing attempts to consolidate their femininities, which participants disapproved of and misperceived as an invitation to be violated. Furthermore, it creates expectations for girls to conform to conservative norms and propagates stereotypes against girls who contravene societal expectations. SNSs like Facebook protect itself by getting online users to accept certain conditions of interacting in that space and, in doing so, removes itself from being accountable for particular issues that emerge online. Hence, there were views that girls who were violated

invited trouble by not being mindful of the terms and conditions associated with that space and therefore blamed for such occurrences.

Participants shared their views that girls who engaged in transactional relationships stemming from online interactions, and lesbian girls were at risk of being violated, which is related to dominant social norms. Homosexual girls were also viewed as aggressors online. This was not a common finding and showed that homosexual girls exercise negative power where they wanted to coerce heterosexual girls into conforming to homosexuality. Several participants shared beliefs that girls create trouble online, leading to cyber violence prevailing. It suggests that they disparage girls for the way they conduct themselves online. There was evidence of girls gossiping online, and some participants admitted to engaging in such acts, which possibly indicates limited fear of reprisal. Participants noted that cyber gossip occurs in the context of friendship, highlighting that while friendships are generally associated with care and support, there are issues that stem from conflict and exposure of information which ought to be kept private. Hence, it is crucial to be aware that cyber violence is not restricted to particular groups of people.

Participants also associated cyber violence with girls' jealousy, competitiveness about appearances, popularity, and attention-seeking behaviours. Amongst girls, being popular was important, but conforming to it is also rejected, showing juxtapose. They stated that girls fight with girls online over boys, especially in cases of infidelity. It shows that girls place value on their relationships with boys and blame girls for cheating, in that way, creating double standards that foster gender inequalities. These findings highlight evidence of girls using the expected norms of femininity to malign girls for their conduct.

There are several reasons for cyber violence prevailing amongst teenage girls, such as the influence of social contexts, particular usage or misuse of cyberspace features, coercive attitudes that expect girls to perpetrate cyber violence, and most conspicuously, performances of gender online.

8.4 Insights from this study

There have been numerous studies done in this field by conducting research in physical spaces, and there have also been studies conducted online. Many researchers administered studies related to the phenomenon in online spaces (Landstedt & Persson, 2014; Berson, Berson, & Ferron, 2002; Gasior, 2009; Kritzinger, 2017; Thompson, 2016). Some scholars adopted online

and offline methods to research issues (Ringrose et al., 2012; Thompson, 2016; Kernaghan & Elwood, 2013). It suggests that research methodologies are evolving to accommodate developments that occur.

The methodological contribution of this study is the innovative use of a blended approach by conducting, individual face-to-face interviews and a virtual group discussion on a Facebook group to research teenage girls. It also enabled me to enhance data collection by observing the online interactions of participants on the Facebook group created for this study. I also utilised images related to cyber violence as visual stimuli during the group discussion.

In researching teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them, the findings of this study suggest that violence manifests in all spaces. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge a culture of violence that prevails. Nevertheless, particular features of online spaces are nuanced. For example, features of online spaces allow for multiple identities to prevail online, which range from real to fake and also for being inhibited in physical spaces but active in cyberspace. Therefore, it is glaring that online relations are transient, making evident the complexities associated with trusting people online. Given the double-edged sword nature of cyberspace, it is imperative to be aware of its damaging impact.

The findings of this study suggest that it is not only girls but also boys, who perpetrate cyber gossip, suggesting a disruption of stereotypical gender norms. There were beliefs amongst participants that even though lesbians experience cyber violence as victims, they also use violence to coerce heterosexual girls into homosexual relationships. It is, therefore, necessary to move away from assumptions about individuals and particular groups of people. Findings related to slut-shaming in this study posit that girls are slut-shamed not only related to promiscuity but also suspicions about HIV, pregnancy and transactional relationships, thereby emphasising the complex nature of concepts like "slut."

There was mostly evidence of parents providing support and advising their teenage daughters who experienced cyber violence. It is positive and is crucial in opening the channels of communication in households to assist teenagers in dealing with such issues. However, there were two instances in this study, where girls who experienced cyber violence were blamed, rebuked and remained under their parents' surveillance. It shows the importance of parents becoming aware of alternate ways in which they can handle such situations appropriately, other

than them colluding with notions that blame girls. My justification for this claim also stems from observations that teenage girls blame themselves and become more self-conscious of their online interactions after being violated online.

Therefore, there must be a careful examination of each situation and an understanding about how we project girls in light of their actions. Despite teenage girls becoming emotionally distressed by cyber violence incidents, they are also agents of change who, from their negative experiences, seek justice not only for themselves but also to prevent other girls from having similar adverse encounters in future. While the "mean girl" discourse remained evident in this study, there were also incidents which illustrate that girls are not necessarily nasty to other girls but try to counsel and comfort them, especially when they contend with mistreatment online. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of girls' identities and the importance of not homogenising them as mere victims of violence or merely agents of violence, but also recognise them as agents of change.

8.4.1 Implications for issues related to gender

The findings from this study demonstrate that teenage girls deal with several challenges relating to their cyber interactions and face restrictions related to how they dress and conduct themselves. They are vulnerable to gender violence in all of the spaces that they occupy, and cyberspace is one of them. Teenage girls are also powerfully invested in their reputation, and they actively construct, negotiate and present their identities in virtual spaces which link to gendered norms. The data from this study show how teenage girls actively position themselves in complex ways that often place them at risk of being violated. It is necessary to understand girls' choices about how they project themselves online and also how they construct others online. It is important to consider them as active agents online instead of merely regarding them as passive, while at the same time, being aware that risks related to reputation constrain their agency. Teenage girls experiencing cyber violence as victims, perpetrators or bystanders makes it crucial to consider the multiple power relations that operate online.

In addition to violation from boys and men, girls also violate girls, although in different ways. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the multiple identities that are operating online, which create hierarchies of power. Attacks in cyberspace sometimes spill over into physical spaces and vice versa. Nevertheless, it is vital not to minimise the effects of violence that remains in cyberspace.

Considering that this study focusses on girls, it is vital to consider the social construction of gender, how girls perform their femininities where boys enact their masculinities, which is not unique to cyberspace. It implies an interrelationship amongst cyberspace, physical spaces and gender. However, by no means do I suggest that girls or boys should restrain themselves from interaction in cyberspace, as they have the right to engage in every space.

There needs to be a rethinking about and disruption of constructions of masculinities and femininities to challenge gendered notions and to work with boys and girls to address such power relations. We need to be especially aware of how we position girls within particular gendered discourses. Policymakers must take into account that stereotypical gendered notions and gender divisions exist, and contest them by adopting more gender-equitable stances. Initiatives must deconstruct gendered notions and encourage greater participation of all online. There needs to be suitable and strategic interventions to promote gender equality and healthy and safe interactions offline and online.

8.4.2 Implications for cyberspace developers

Cyber mechanisms to detect violent content online should be used to remove such content and hold perpetrators accountable for posting it. Social media platforms should be used to encourage dialogue about tackling issues like cyber violence and other gendered issues too. It is necessary to draw attention to the nuanced nature of cyberspace features that can be useful, but also features that create a risk to facilitate a greater understanding of the double-edged sword nature of cyberspace. Creating understandings and awareness related to rights in cyberspace is crucial in creating a safer, more mutually respectful and conducive space for online users. It is vital to create more avenues wherein victims can report cyber violence, and also to promote a culture of reporting to increase redress for such incidents, without fear of judgement, shame or further attack. The preservation of evidence of violent cyber incidents is crucial for legal processes to be carried out and to achieve social justice.

8.4.3 Implications for education

Parents, teachers, religious organisations and society as a whole must be committed to promoting gender equality. It is essential to disrupt gender stereotypes that contribute to unequal power hierarchies. This unequal gender power creates risks of violence for girls. Given the specific focus on cyber violence for this study, my subsequent discussion in this section relates specifically to addressing cyber violence.

Parents need to familiarise themselves with the context of cyberspace and issues like cyber violence, to enable them to guide their children and unleash the positive potential of cyberspace. Parents must open the lines of communication in their households, be willing to listen to their children, and to look at situations holistically. Parents need to assist their children with the challenges they face, instead of merely revoking their online privileges and rebuking them for being violated or for particular online conduct.

The school curriculum needs to turn its attention to cyber violence, as this phenomenon mainly affects teenagers. School-based policies, such as the school code of conduct and Disciplinary, Safety and Security (DSS) committees, need to make provision for cyber violence and procedures to deal with them. Measures to deal with perpetrators should be consistent and suitable, and not reflect bias or prejudice or invoke shame. In the school curriculum, there must be subject content related to cyber violence to educate learners about it and help them to acquire cyber-safe skills and to practice acceptable online conduct.

The nature and content of cyber violence to be incorporated into the school curriculum must consider factors such as cyberspace features, forms of cyber violence, dynamics related to gender, online and offline identities, and awareness about cyber safety. Pre-service teachers should be trained at higher education levels to teach children and teenagers about cyber violence and be better equipped to deal with such issues at the school level. There must be compulsory modules about cyber violence at the tertiary level to prepare future teachers for this task. The Department of Education must facilitate regular workshops for educators in keeping with various developments in cyberspace.

At the community, higher education and school level, it is crucial to educate various groups of people about social media practices regularly. This must be done to encourage cyber safety and create an awareness about cyber violence, its relationship to physical violence, its impact, and support and intervention mechanisms available to them. It is necessary as cyber violence is not only perpetrated and experienced by teenagers but also by adults and includes not only those who are known to them but also strangers or people using a fake identity. Furthermore, it is of importance to bear in mind that cyber violence affects not only children and teenagers but also adults on a different level, due to the continuation in the cyber context. Support groups and counselling programmes for victims of cyber violence are critical in assisting them in dealing with the violent experiences they endure. Initiatives implemented must involve schools, teachers, parents, learners, cyber authorities, technologists and developers, to foster

transformation in online spaces in a way that embraces different population groups and leaves no one behind.

8.4.4 Implications for future researchers

The current study explored teenage girls' understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them, which is an under-researched area, especially in South Africa. However, globally, there is a wealth of research related to the forms of cyber violence and its impact, especially on the youth. Issues related to class did not feature strongly in this study. However, future studies must consider the nuanced ways in which class operates with gender and sexuality. While more research related to teenage girls is required, studies involving boys and girls are necessary to gain more insight into the gendered nature of this phenomenon. Researchers should also include other stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, cyber technologists, and developers in their studies, as the impact of cyber violence is far-reaching. Therefore, it is imperative to elicit data from a range of sources.

It would also be of interest to research the same sample of girls to gather whether their awareness has been raised and online practices have changed since their participation in the study. Researching why some teenage girls do not engage in cyber violence is another issue that researchers can investigate.

Cyber violence has implications not only for teenagers but also includes adults due to the continuation of this issue, as mentioned previously. Therefore, it is vital to research cyber violence amongst university students also to gain insight into their understandings and experiences of this phenomenon and reasons for its prevalence amongst them.

Given that this phenomenon is about cyberspace, it is vital to research it using different methodologies and diverse platforms, considering that several cyber platforms are mushrooming and becoming popular. It would be useful to gain insight into this multidimensional phenomenon. Developing and clarifying terminology that pertains to cyberspace and its mediums is crucial to achieving clarity and precision in research, as variations in terminology create possibilities for misperceptions and problematises matters.

From conducting this study, I identified that the relationship between cyberspace and physical spaces is problematic, in the sense that it leads to girls being under surveillance, threatens their safety and harms their reputation. It leads to them being at risk both online and offline. Hence,

studies should focus on how the interrelationship between cyberspace and physical space poses a risk to teenagers. There is also a need to understand how gender performances in society and online are connected.

8.5 Conclusion

Most young people have access to cyberspace, and it is particularly popular amongst young women. The evolution of cyberspaces over the years has led to it becoming an indispensable resource for communication, information, education, entertainment, advertising, and business. At the time of conducting this study, Facebook was a popular site widely used by teenagers. In spaces like Facebook, self-presentation and self-disclosure are a part of teenagers' construction of their identities. Furthermore, teenagers utilise Facebook to pursue both social and personal goals, which they cannot achieve offline. Girls use social networking sites like Facebook to construct their femininities, but it also opens up spaces for perpetrators to violate them.

The current study contributes towards teenage girls' detailed understandings about cyber violence from their perspectives. It gleans insight into the gendered nature of how teenage girls experience cyber violence as victims, perpetrators, or bystanders. In this investigation, I explored the concept that cyber violence is both similar to and different from physical violence, showing variations. This study explored reasons for the prevalence of cyber violence amongst teenage girls, which is attributed mostly to gendered performances online. It also contributes to understanding young femininities by analysing how girls conform to normative constructions of femininity but also reject them. Girls were recognised as challenging perpetrators of cyber violence, suggesting their use of violence to defend and assert themselves, even at the risk of being further attacked. Reporting of incidences of cyber violence was noticeable and is significant in dealing with these issues.

Addressing gender inequalities in cyberspace is essential, especially within a context where gender violence is rife in physical spaces too. Attempts to promote gender equality and deal with social issues are underway nationally and globally. Working towards ensuring girls' and boys' participation in online spaces is not hindered can foster transformation in online spaces. However, increasing the participation of those who reproduce either hegemonic notions of masculinity or collude with traditional gender stereotypes may serve to disempower girls and empower boys and men, and perpetuate violent attitudes. It also fails to address gender stereotypes in any social context. There is a need not only for gender equality and balance in

cyberspace but, most crucially a necessity to support the construction of alternate forms of masculinities and femininities. Increasing safe cyber interactions can be an avenue to increase the equitable involvement of all young people online.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

30 June 2017

Ms Preenisha Naicker (208510657)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Naicker,

Protocol reference number : HSS/0206/017D
Project title: Exploring the understandings and experiences of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

With regards to your response received on 26 June 2017 to our letter of 06 April 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

.....

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Prof Shakila Singh
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Simon B Khoza
cc School Administrator: Ms B Bhengu-Mnguni, Ms T Khumalo, Ms P Ncayiyana & Ms M Ngcobo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 2: Informed consent letter (school principal)

Dear Principal

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Preenisha Naicker, and I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would like to invite learners of your school to participate in a study that I am undertaking.

A brief description of the study follows:

Title – Exploring the understandings and experiences of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

The project will involve communication amongst teenage girls and myself on a special Facebook Group created for this study, to explore what teenage girls understand about cyber violence as cyber violence is a growing concern. I selected teenage girls to participate as they are largely affected by cyber violence. In order for interventions aimed at reducing cyber violence to be effective, it is important for teenage girls to actively reflect and share their experiences and understandings of cyber violence. The two methods include an online group discussion (On a Facebook group) and individual face-to-face interviews with the same teenage girls to explore their understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them.

I am requesting the participation of teenage girls from your school in the two methods of the project.

Please note that:

- I will provide them with mobile data for use in this project
- Their confidentiality is guaranteed as their inputs will not be attributed to them or you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion. I will utilise a pseudonym for their name and the name of the school.
- The online interactions will be ongoing for approximately three weeks before the start of the individual interviews, and the individual face-to-face interviews may last for approximately 60 minutes.
- Any information given by them cannot be used against them, and the data I collect data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- I will copy the online discussions and store them. Face-to-face individual interviews will be audio-recorded, then transcribed and printed out.

- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- You and the participants have a choice for your school to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You or the participants will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- Their involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- I will not conduct research during school hours or exam period. Hence, the school will not be disrupted by this study.
- I will send the results of the study and any publications arising from the study to the participants by email.
- The study is not designed to create any stress or anxiety but if their participation gives rise to any anxiety or stress then you can contact me, and I will arrange and pay for the school counsellor to assist them.

My contact details are as follows:

preenishanaicker75@gmail.com

Tel: 0795438141/0399795770

You may also contact the HSSREC Research Office through:

Prem Mohun: Tel: 031 260 4557, E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Mariette Snyman: Tel: 031 260 8350, E-mail: Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Phumelele Ximba: Tel: 031 260 3587, E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I……..**.....** (Full name of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the nature of the research study undertaken, and I consent for learners of this school to participate in the research study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my school from participating at any time, should I want to do so. Participants will receive feedback on the findings after the study has been conducted.

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL……..

DATE:……

Appendix 3: Informed consent letter (School Governing Body Chairperson)

Dear School Governing Body Chairperson

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Preenisha Naicker, and I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would like to invite learners of your school to participate in a study that I am undertaking.

A brief description of the study follows:

Title – Exploring the understandings and experiences of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

The project will involve communication amongst teenage girls and myself on a special Facebook Group created for this study, to explore what teenage girls understand about cyber violence as cyber violence is a growing concern. I selected teenage girls to participate as they are largely affected by cyber violence. In order for interventions aimed at reducing cyber violence to be effective, it is important for teenage girls to actively reflect and share their experiences and understandings of cyber violence. The two methods include an online group discussion (On a Facebook group) and individual face-to-face interviews with the same teenage girls to explore their understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them.

I am requesting the participation of teenage girls from your school in the two methods of the project.

Please note that:

- I will provide them with mobile data for use in this project
- Their confidentiality is guaranteed as their inputs will not be attributed to them in person, but reported only as a population member opinion. I will utilise a pseudonym for their name and the name of the school.
- The online interactions will be ongoing for approximately three weeks before the start of the individual interviews, and the individual face-to-face interviews may last for approximately 60 minutes.
- Any information given by them cannot be used against them, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.

- I will copy the online discussions and store them. Individual face-to-face interviews will be audio-recorded, then transcribed and printed out.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- The participants have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You or the participants will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- Their involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- I will not conduct research during school hours or exam period. Hence, the school will not be disrupted by this study.
- The results of the study and any publications arising from the study will be sent to the participants by email.
- The study is not designed to create any stress or anxiety but if their participation gives rise to any anxiety or stress then they can contact me, and I will arrange and pay for the school counsellor to assist them.

My contact details are as follows:

preenishanaicker75@gmail.com

Tel: 0795438141/0399795770

You may also contact the HSSREC Research Office through:

Prem Mohun: Tel: 031 260 4557, E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Mariette Snyman: Tel: 031 260 8350, E-mail: Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Phumelele Ximba: Tel: 031 260 3587, E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I……..... (Full name of School Governing Body chairperson) hereby confirm that I understand the nature of the research study being undertaken, and I consent to participate in the research study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my school from participating at any time, should I want to do so. Participants will receive feedback on the findings after the study has been conducted.

SIGNATURE OF SGB CHAIRPERSON……..

DATE:……

Appendix 4: Informed consent letter (School Counsellor)

Dear School Counsellor

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Preenisha Naicker, and I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would like to invite learners from your school to participate in a study that I am undertaking.

A brief description of the study follows:

Title – Exploring the understandings and experiences of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

The project will involve communication amongst teenage girls and myself on a special Facebook Group created for this study, to explore what teenage girls understand about cyber violence as cyber violence is a growing concern. I selected teenage girls to participate as they are largely affected by cyber violence. In order for interventions aimed at reducing cyber violence to be effective, it is important for teenage girls to actively reflect and share their experiences and understandings of cyber violence. The two methods include an online group discussion (On a Facebook group) and individual face-to-face interviews with the same teenage girls to explore their understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them.

Although my research and its methods are not designed to create any stress or distress amongst my participants, I am aware that violence is a sensitive issue and that I may require your expertise if the need arises.

I require your assistance in cases whereby participants may require counselling sessions resulting from sensitive issues that may arise during the Virtual Group Discussion and Individual face-to-face Interviews. Counselling sessions with participants must remain confidential to protect their identities. Your remuneration will be based on a mutually agreed-upon fee.

My contact details are as follows:

preenishanaicker75@gmail.com

Tel: 0795438141/0399795770

You may also contact the HSSREC Research Office through:

Prem Mohun: Tel: 031 260 4557, E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Mariette Snyman: Tel: 031 260 8350, E-mail: Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Phumelele Ximba: Tel: 031 260 3587, E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I……..... (Full names of SCHOOL COUNSELLOR) hereby confirm that I understand the nature of the research study being undertaken and I consent to assist teenage girls who participate in the research study and require my professional assistance. I understand that counselling sessions with me will be confidential.

SIGNATURE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLOR……..

DATE:……

Appendix 5: Informed consent letter (Participant)

Dear Learner

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Preenisha Naicker, and I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would like to invite you to participate in a study that I am undertaking.

A brief description of the study follows:

Title – Exploring the understandings and experiences of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

The project will involve communication amongst teenage girls and myself on a special Facebook Group created for this study, to explore what teenage girls understand about cyber violence as cyber violence is a growing concern. I selected teenage girls to participate as they are largely affected by cyber violence. In order for interventions aimed at reducing cyber violence to be effective, it is important for teenage girls to actively reflect and share their experiences and understandings of cyber violence. The two methods include an online group discussion (On a Facebook group) and individual face-to-face interviews with the same teenage girls to explore their understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them.

I am requesting your participation in the two methods of the project.

Please note that:

- I will provide you with data for use in this project
- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The online interactions will be ongoing for approximately three weeks before the start of individual interviews, and the individual face-to-face interviews may last for approximately 60 minutes.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.

- I will copy the online discussions and store them. Individual face-to-face interviews will be audio-recorded, then transcribed and printed out.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- I will not conduct research during school hours or exam period.
- The results of the study and any publications arising from the study will be sent to you by email.
- The study is not designed to create any stress or anxiety but if your participation gives rise to any anxiety or stress then you can contact me, and I will arrange and pay for the school counsellor to assist you.

My contact details are as follows:

preenishanaicker75@gmail.com

Tel: 0795438141/0399795770

You may also contact the HSSREC Research Office through:

Prem Mohun: Tel: 031 260 4557, E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Mariette Snyman: Tel: 031 260 8350, E-mail: Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Phumelele Ximba: Tel: 031 260 3587, E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I……..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the nature of the research study being undertaken, and I consent to participate in the research study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from participating at any time, should I want to do so. I also understand that I will receive feedback on the findings from my participation after the study has been conducted.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT……..

DATE:……

Appendix 6: Informed consent letter (Parent)

Dear Parent

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Preenisha Naicker, and I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would like to invite your child/ward to participate in a study that I am undertaking.

A brief description of the study follows:

Title – Exploring the understandings and experiences of cyber violence amongst teenage girls.

The project will involve communication amongst teenage girls and myself on a special Facebook Group created for this study, to explore what teenage girls understand about cyber violence as cyber violence is a growing concern. Teenage girls have been selected to participate as they are largely affected by cyber violence. In order for interventions aimed at reducing cyber violence to be effective, it is important for teenage girls to actively reflect and share their experiences and understandings of cyber violence.

The two methods include an online group discussion (On a Facebook group) and individual face-to-face interviews with the same teenage girls to explore their understandings and experiences of cyber violence and reasons for its prevalence amongst them.

I am requesting the participation of your child in the two methods of the project.

Please note that:

- I will provide your child with mobile data for use in this project
- Her confidentiality is guaranteed as her inputs will not be attributed to her in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The online interactions will be ongoing for approximately three weeks before and after the start of individual interviews, and the individual face-to-face interviews may last for approximately 60 minutes.
- Any information given by her cannot be used against her, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.

- I will copy the online discussions and store them. Individual face-to-face interviews will be audio-recorded, then transcribed and printed out.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- She has a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. She will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Her involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- I will not conduct research during school hours or exam period.
- The results of the study and any publications arising from the study will be sent to her by email.
- The study is not designed to create any stress or anxiety but if her participation gives rise to any anxiety or stress then you can contact me, and I will arrange and pay for the school counsellor to assist her.

My contact details are as follows:

preenishanaicker75@gmail.com

Tel: 0795438141/0399795770

You may also contact the HSSREC Research Office through:

Prem Mohun: Tel: 031 260 4557, E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Mariette Snyman: Tel: 031 260 8350, E-mail: Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Phumelele Ximba: Tel: 031 260 3587, E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for the contribution of your child to this research

DECLARATION

I……..... (Full name of parent of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the nature of the research study being undertaken, and I consent to my child participating in the research study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my child from participating at any time, should I want to do so. I also understand that my child will receive feedback on the findings from her participation after the study has been conducted.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT……..

DATE:……

Appendix 7: Face-To-Face Individual Interview Schedule

PART A

Pseudonym : _____

Grade : ___ Race : _____

Age : ___

Place of Residence: _____

Who works at home? _____

What jobs do your parents/guardians do?

_____

No of siblings : ____ Ages of siblings : _____

Do your siblings interact in cyberspace? _____

ICE-BREAKER QUESTIONS

1. When did you begin using social networks?

2. On what social media do you interact?

3. Is your mobile device borrowed or own?

4. How many hours do you spend per day interacting on social networks (cyberspace)?

5. What are the benefits of interacting in cyberspace?

PART B

6. Describe your interactions in cyberspace with girls and with boys.

7. What do you talk about in cyberspace with girls and with boys?

8. With whom do you interact? Why?

9. What are their ages?

10. How do you protect yourself in cyberspace?

11. What do you understand by the term cyber violence?

12. What types/forms of Cyber Violence exist?

13. Have you discussed aspects of Cyber Violence with your friends? What do your friends understand by the term cyber violence?

14. Who do you think is affected by cyber violence? (girls, boys, young, old…)Why?

15. Are girls affected by cyber violence more than boys? Discuss your reasons

16. Do you think that girls have different experiences to boys in cyberspace? Explain further.

17. How are teenage girls affected by cyber violence?

18. What are the reasons for abuse or violence in cyberspace against girls?

19. Who do you think is responsible for cyber violence? Why?

20. Have you experienced any of the forms of cyber violence mentioned? Tell me about the experience. Who were the perpetrators of it? Why do you think they treated you in that way?

21. How did the experience affect you?

22. How did you deal with the experience?

23. Tell me about your opinions of cyberspace since this experience?

24. How are your interactions in cyberspace different/same since this experience?

25. What experiences of violence have your friends encountered in cyberspace?

26. How did they feel about it?

27. How did they deal with it?

28. How has it affected their life and their relationships?

29. Did you violate someone in cyberspace? (Call them names, post nasty comments about them, create and send embarrassing pictures of them to others, spread rumours about them, bully, intimidate or threaten them in cyberspace). Discuss those experiences. Why did/did you not engage in that behaviour?

30. What were the consequences of your actions?

31. Did one of your friends/contacts violate someone in cyberspace? (Call them names, post nasty comments about them, create and send embarrassing pictures of them to others, spread rumours about them, bully, intimidate or threaten them in cyberspace). What do you think are their reasons for such behaviour?

32. What were the consequences of his/her actions?

Appendix 8

Virtual FGD Schedule:

The pictures (Figure 1) that I utilised to start the discussion

1. Which of these pictures show the worst kind of abuse a teenage girl can encounter? Explain your choice.
2. What do others think?
3. Which of these pictures show the most common kind of abuse/violence experienced by teenage girls?

4. How is the picture you selected an example of cyber violence?

5. What emotions does the picture you selected invoke in you?

6. What does the term cyber violence mean to each of you?

7. Why are girls affected by abuse/violence via social media?

Appendix 9: Semi-Structured Individual Face-To-Face Interview Transcript

INTERVIEW NO: 8

Pseudonym : Akira

Grade : 11

Race : Coloured

Age : 16

Place of Residence: Roseneath, Umkomaas

Who works at home? No one

What jobs do your parents/guardians do?

Pensioners

No of siblings : 0

Ages of siblings: N/A

Do your siblings interact in cyberspace? N/A

Researcher (Preenisha): **Welcome to this interview. I hope that you will be comfortable speaking to me. Please feel free to ask questions as we proceed. If you do not understand anything, ask me to repeat or to rephrase it. You have a right not to answer questions which you do not wish to. I am audio recording this interview as we speak. You are free to exercise your decision not to participate at any given time. I will not disclose any information to other teachers or learners. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, I will stop the interview. Should you require counselling, I will provide it to you at my cost. I will use a pseudonym instead of your name to protect your identity.**

PART B

Researcher: When did you begin using social networks?

Participant (Akira): In 2013 when I was 13 years old

Researcher: On what social media, do you interact?

Participant: Mostly WhatsApp, sometimes Facebook

Researcher: Is your mobile device borrowed or your own?

Participant: It is my own

Researcher: How many hours do you spend per day interacting on social networks (cyberspace)?

It depends on my study time also. During weekdays I am not allowed to use my phone, but during the weekend, it would be about 8 hours or so.

Researcher: What are the benefits of interacting in cyberspace?

Participant: You find out a lot of things. If you need information, you may ask a person. It is good for research purposes. There are dangers too, for example, if you send a person an inappropriate picture that can go viral. You can also be cyberbullied.

Researcher: Describe your interactions in cyberspace with girls and with boys.

Participant: With girls uhm it is very friendly. I do not like talking to boys a lot. When someone asks me for my number, I do not give it to them just like that, and I judge the person first. I see if they are going to irritate me, then I will not give it to them. If they do not seem decent, I do not respond to them. A lot of boys are stupid and talk stupid stories. Like they ask if you would go out with them and stuff and I have no time for that.

Researcher: What do you talk about in cyberspace with girls and with boys?

Participant: It is nice talking to girls because we have our girl talk and we understand each other, we talk mostly about school. My friends who live in Joburg ask me how I am as I moved here lately. They tell me their boyfriend stories. We discuss things that happened at school. New things, yeah. With boys, it depends, I talk a lot to them about music. If it is a good boy, then music and school and games, like call of duty, for example.

Researcher: With whom do you interact? Why?

Participant: Friends and family. Boys and girls. They enjoy talking to me. They are nice people. I have an understanding with the majority of the people who are my contacts.

Researcher: What are their approximate ages?

Participant: Mostly my age. Youngest is my cousin who is ten years old. My parents are also my contacts.

Researcher: How do you protect yourself in cyberspace?

Participant: I am a very firm person mam. I stand up for myself. I am not weak-minded. I judge a person before I speak to them. If they ask me for something I am not willing to give, I will let them know that it is a no. I have a password on my phone and uhm it ensures that no one can just enter my phone because sometimes people tend just to read people's stuff. I do not have privacy settings. I do not feel the need to do so.

Researcher: What do you understand by the term cyber violence?

Participant: Well, when I think about the term, I think about people abusing others with words in cyberspace. When a picture you sent to someone goes viral, then many people use bad words against you and so forth. People insult you on social media. They do not see your side of the story, and they judge you. Some teenagers view cyber violence as small and not important, but it is a huge issue. Some people commit suicide. It causes stress and depression. Girls are going through a lot because of cyberspace.

Researcher: What types/forms of Cyber Violence exist?

Participant: Sexual, like many girls, have their videos posted, and it is embarrassing for them. They send videos of themselves to the wrong people. Then there is also insulting others, ganging up on people and ruining their image. It can be emotional and verbal.

Researcher: Have you discussed aspects of Cyber Violence with your friends? What do your friends understand by the term cyber violence?

Participant: No, because it does not affect me.

Researcher: Who do you think is affected by cyber violence? (girls, boys, young, old…)Why?

Participant: Teenagers, mostly young girls. Many young girls make the mistake of sending inappropriate pictures and videos (nudity), which goes viral. Girls are very kind mam. Especially if you have a boyfriend, then you want to do anything to make him happy. Boys force girls. Whatever his requests, example a nude picture. If you look at social networks, mostly girls are on it. Hence they are affected by it.

Researcher: Are girls affected by cyber violence more than boys? Discuss your reasons

Participant: Yes. Girls do less asking. Boys do more asking. Like asking for nudes, boys ask. Girls are weak—most of them, not all of them. Saying no to a boy is hard for them.

Researcher: Do you think that girls have different experiences compared to boys in cyberspace? Explain further.

Participant: I think it is different because girls post a lot of pictures of themselves. I am on Facebook, so I do have many friends (girls), and I see them posting. They like flaunting. They like posing. They post about the clothes they wear, where they are and what they are eating … so they get violated. Boys are plain and simple. They mostly post group pictures. They do not share everything with the world. Like if they are eating at a certain place, they will not share everything about that experience.

Researcher: How are teenage girls affected by cyber violence?

Participant: It can lead to self-mutilation; they can get stressed. They skip school. Like once a bad picture is posted, they feel like going to school will embarrass them further. They become someone else. They change who they are. They communicate less. They stop eating and become anorexic because they believe they are unwanted and not loved. They go through depression.

Researcher: What are the reasons for abuse or violence in cyberspace against girls?

Participant: Boys have this theory that girls are weak. They think they can take advantage of you.

Researcher: Who do you think is responsible for cyber violence? Why?

Participant: Uhm teenagers, and mostly boys. Teenagers use social media the most. Adults do not have time. When a boy compliments a girl, she feels good. Boys are smooth talkers, they talk nicely to you online but have ulterior motives like hurting you.

Researcher: Have you experienced any of the forms of cyber violence mentioned? Tell me about the experience. Who were the perpetrators of it? Why do you think they treated you in that way?

Participant: No, mam. However, I have been asked to send a picture on Twitter. This random boy asked me for a nude picture of myself. I said no. I am firm in my words. Uhm, he has bad thoughts on his mind that is why he asked me. He wanted to use it for his own stories probably. Some of these boys have sites where they post videos and pics of girls, so he wanted it for that maybe.

Researcher: How did the experience affect you?

Participant: It did not affect me at all because I am firm in my words. If he was angry by what I said then, that is his problem.

Researcher: How did you deal with the experience?

Participant: I blocked him. He asked I said no, simple.

Researcher: Tell me about your opinions of cyberspace since this experience?

Participant: It can lead to good or bad. We need the right people in cyberspace only. The other people cause problems which is unnecessary.

Researcher: How are your interactions in cyberspace different/same since this experience?

Participant: I am more careful to whom I talk. I do not accept requests from strange people. Once they talk bad things, I block them. I have to be on guard. It is not the same. Nobody bothered me after this because they got to know my personality. I did tell my parents what happened but not to the police.

Researcher: What experiences of violence have your friends encountered in cyberspace?

Participant: I have a friend, who also interacts on Instagram which a lot of people are interacting on now. A boy requested nude pictures and spoke badly to her. He had a sexual kind of talk going on. She was feeling uncomfortable.

Researcher: How did she feel about it?

Participant: She was angered and upset because he kept nagging and irritating her.

Researcher: How did they deal with it?

Participant: She used vulgar language on him, then blocked him. It was just some random boy…..a stranger

Researcher: How has it affected their life and their relationships?

Participant: It did not really affect her because it did not happen again. However, she kept her guard up. She judges people first before she talks to them.

Researcher: What experiences of violence have your friends encountered in cyberspace?

Participant: A boy that was initially unknown to my friend was calling and sending messages online to her. He threatened her, saying he was standing outside her house. She freaked out; she was scared and nervous as he said he was coming to get her, also sexual threats. She started to get scared and nervous and did not know how to react because it came out of nowhere. Her brother works for an IT company, so she went to him and told him to trace it. It turned out to be someone who she knew. Her family kept the key under the door, and he knew this. He

probably had a grudge against her. He eventually stopped because she also threatened to call the police, so he got scared. After that, she built up walls; she is scared about what can happen. She is conservative and keeps to herself now.

Researcher: Did you violate someone in cyberspace? (call them names, post nasty comments about them, create and send embarrassing pictures of them to others, spread rumours about them, bully, intimidate or threaten them in cyberspace). Discuss those experiences. Why did/did you not engage in that behaviour?

Participant: No. If a person has not troubled me, then I do not see the need to be violent.

Researcher: What are the consequences of your actions?

Participant: I am seen as quiet. They know I am friendly, but I do not get involved.

Researcher: Did one of your friends/contacts violate someone in cyberspace? (call them names, post nasty comments about them, create and send embarrassing pictures of them to others, spread rumours about them, bully, intimidate or threaten them in cyberspace). What do you think are their reasons for such behaviour?

Participant: Uhm, yes. Someone from school, a boy, swore my friend's mother on WhatsApp. Even in person. So my friend went on WhatsApp and swore them back, she told them it hurts when a person swears your mother. She was really angry about it. I think he wanted to be cool. There was no fight, conflict or argument, just the swearing.

Researcher: What were the consequences of his/her actions?

Participant: People look at my friend differently. This boy got sworn at, and people looked down upon him.

Researcher: What advice would you give to a person who interacts in cyberspace?

Participant: Be firm, be strong with your words, no means no. If you do not want something bad to happen to you, then do not bully someone else. It will come back to you. Have the idea of karma in your head. Do not gossip because it causes conflict; do not insult others even when a fight happens do not get involved. Keep your guard up. Be firm in what you say. Do not mutilate yourself if someone insults you. Be yourself.

Researcher: What advice would you give to a perpetrator of cyber violence?

Participant: What you do will come back to you. Be careful because if someone traces your number, you will get caught and into a lot of trouble. Stop your nonsense and focus on other things like school.

Researcher: Select one picture which you think is the worst form of cyber violence a girl can experience.

Participant: Picture 7.

Researcher: Provide a reason for your answer

Participant: Many people are seeing it, and it scares them. They also get affected badly. It threatens rape, so a person does not know what to do. Plus Twitter is a very big social network. So it can go viral.

Researcher: As you were looking through the pictures, what emotions were being stirred within yourself?

Participant: I feel angry and disappointed because of the way people look down upon girls, they (people) post such terrible things. It can go viral, so the way it makes the girl look bad.

Researcher: Thank you for participating in this interview and for taking the time to speak to me.

Participant: You are welcome, mam. Thank you for inviting me.

Appendix 10: Turn It In Report

PhD Thesis

ORIGINALITY REPORT

4%	3%	2%	%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	<1%
2	journals.sagepub.com Internet Source	<1%
3	www.scirp.org Internet Source	<1%
4	eprints.brighton.ac.uk Internet Source	<1%
5	www.timeslive.co.za Internet Source	<1%
6	www.rosavzw.be Internet Source	<1%
7	mafiadoc.com Internet Source	<1%
8	files.eric.ed.gov Internet Source	<1%
9	dc.swosu.edu Internet Source	<1%

Appendix 11: Editor's Certificate

K. Kamal

Kirosha Kamal Communications (KKC)

24 Edward Avenue, Crowthorne, Johannesburg

Kirosha@kkcommunications.co.za

DECLARATION OF EDITING OF PhD thesis, 110 996 words: Exploring the understandings and experiences of cyber violence amongst teenage girls

By **Preenisha Naicker**

I hereby declare that I carried out language editing of the PhD thesis on behalf of Preenisha Naicker.

I am a professional writer and editor with over 15 many years of experience in editing and writing for a range of publications, platforms and industries, including academic articles and theses. In addition, I am a full spectrum communications specialist having worked in both private and public sectors and am a former member of the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA), Marketing Advancement and Communication in Education (MACE), SA Publication Forum (SAPF), and National Press Club (NPC).

Yours sincerely

Kirosha Kamal

Kirosha@kkcommunications.co.za

Abbreviations/Acronyms

CDA	: Cyber Dating Abuse
DSS	: Disciplinary, Safety and security
ENCA	: E-News Channel Africa
FGD	: Focus Group Discussion
FPS	: Feminist Post-Structuralism
ICT	: Information and Communication Technology
II	: Individual Interview
IM	: Instant Messaging
IPV	: Intimate Partner Violence
IYAC	: International Youth Advisory Congress
KZN	: KwaZulu-Natal
MEC	: Member of the Executive Council
RSA	: Republic of South Africa
SA	: South Africa
SNSs	: Social Networking Sites
UK	: United Kingdom
UN	: United Nations
UNICEF	: United Nations Children's Fund
US	: United States
USA	: United States of America
VAWG	: Violence Against Women and Girls
VAW	: Violence Against Women
VGD	: Virtual Group Discussion
WHO	: World Health Organization
WHOA	: Working to Halt Online Abuse